

MARCH 1960

FANTASTIC

SCIENCE FACT & FICTION

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MARCH 1960

BEGINNING THIS MONTH -
THE MIND THING

AN EXCITING
NEW NOVEL

by

FREDRIC BROWN

STORIES BY
ROBERT F. YOUNG

JORGE-LUIS BORGES

WENZELL BROWN

ROBERT GLOCH

**SKIES
OF INFAMY**

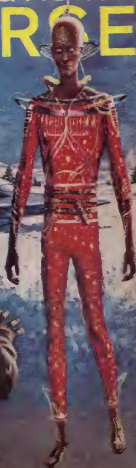
A New Article

by

LESTER DEL REY

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Finally, Mr. Barrett decided to let others in on the secret. Since then he has shown a number of other men and women how to write for money. He has not had to give them any lessons in writing. He has not asked them to go through any long

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Mr. Barrett says that the only skill required is that the aspiring author be able to write a sentence in plain English. Almost anyone with a common school education can write well enough to follow Mr. Barrett's plan, because the contributions you will send to magazines are rarely more than one paragraph in length.

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and will buy from beginners. In other words, he teaches you a method, an angle, a plan for starting to write right away for money.

If you would like to see your writing in print and get paid for it—just send your name on a postcard to Mr. Barrett. He will send full information about his plan of coaching by return mail—postage prepaid. He makes no charge for this information. And, no salesman will call on you. You decide, at home, whether you'd like to try his plan. If the idea of writing twenty or thirty short paragraphs a week and getting back a lot of small checks appeals to you, ask Mr. Barrett for this information.

No telling where it might lead. Such a small start might even open opportunities for real authorship. And, since it can't cost you anything more than a postcard, you'll certainly want to get all the facts. Address postcard to Mr. Benson Barrett, 7454 N. Clark Street, Dept. 22957-S, Chicago 26, Illinois.

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE.

HENRY SCHARF

Publisher

MARCH 1960

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Occupation _____ Weight _____
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If yes, when and for what? _____
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If so, to what extent? _____
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Give Me One Evening And I'll Give You A Push-Button Memory

Yes! Here at last is your chance to gain the super-powered, file-cabinet memory you've always dreamed about... so easily and so quickly that you'll be astounded

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Let me explain! I don't care how poor you may think your memory is now! I believe that you have a memory 10 TO 20 TIMES MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU REALIZE TODAY! I believe that your memory is working at a tiny fraction of the true power today—because you simply don't know the right way to feed it facts! Because you don't know the right way to take names and faces and anything else you want to remember—and burn them into your memory as vividly that you can never forget them!

Yes! Remembering is a trick! Powerful memories can be made to order—you don't have to be born with them! The secret of a super-powered, hair-trigger memory is as simple as tying your shoelace! I can teach it to you in a single evening! And I'm willing to prove it to you without your risking a penny! Here's how!

Would You Invest Three Hours of Your Time to Transform Your Memory?

All I ask from you is this. Let me send you—at my risk—one of the most fascinating books you have ever read. When this book arrives, set aside only one evening. Give this book your uninterrupted attention. And then get ready for one of the most thrilling accomplishments of your entire life!

Take this book and turn to page 38. Read eight short pages—no more! And then, put down the book. Review in your own mind the one simple secret I've shown you. And then—get ready to test your new, **AUTOMATIC** memory!

What you are going to do, in that very first evening, is this! Without referring to the book, you are going to sit down, and you are going to write—not five, not ten, but TWENTY important facts that you have never been able to memorize before! If you are a business man, they may be customers' orders that you have received... if you are a salesman, they may be twenty different products in your line... if

you are a student, they may be the twenty parts of your homework... if you are a housewife, they may be important appointments that you have to keep tomorrow!

In any case, you are simply going to glance over that list again for a few moments. You are going to perform a simple mental trick on each one of those facts—that will burn that fact into your mind, permanently and automatically! And then you are going to put that list away. You're going to bed without thinking of it again.

And the next morning, you are going to amaze your family and friends! When you go down to business, you'll attend to every one of those orders—automatically—without referring to your memo pad! For perhaps the first time in your life, you'll be able to plan ahead your entire day—automatically, in your own mind—without being a slave to reminders, or notes, or other "paper crutches!"

Yes! And you'll amaze your friends by remembering every product in your line—backwards and forwards—in the exact order that you memorized them! You'll keep every single appointment on time—because one appointment will automatically flash into your mind after another—at the precise moment you need them—exactly as though you pushed a mental button!

All this—in a single evening! Here is a gift that will pay you dividends for as long as you live! A simple trick... a simple secret of burning facts into your memory that may change your entire life!

Suddenly, Whole New Worlds of Self-Confidence Open Up for You!

But this is just the beginning of the "miracles" you can perform with your memory! This secret is just one of the over 50 **MEMORY INTENSIFIERS** contained in this book! You have seen men and women use these exact same methods on television to astound you! But you never knew how incredibly simple they

were—once you learned the inside secret!

For instance—**REMEMBERING NAMES AND FACES!** How many times have you been embarrassed, because you couldn't remember the name of the person you were talking to... or introduce him to a friend! In as little as one short week after you receive this book, how would you like to walk into a room full of TWENTY new people... meet each one of them only once... and then remember the names—automatically—for as long as you live!

Yes! These names and faces are filed in the storehouse of your memory—permanently! Whenever you meet these people on the street... whenever you bump into them at the club... whenever they drop in unexpectedly at a friend's house—the instant you see their face, their name pops into your mind automatically! There is no hesitation, no embarrassment! By the time you can reach out to shake their hands, your memory has delivered all the important facts you need to please them!

Think of the advantage in business—when you can call every customer by his first name—and then ask for his wife and children, instantly, by their names! Think of the impression you'll make when you ask him about the state of his business, about his hobbies, when you even repeat—almost word for word—the last conversation you had with him! Think of becoming a celebrity at your club—as the member who "knows everyone"... who can be depended upon to avoid mistakes, to win new friends for the organization, to get things done!

But this is still just the beginning! This book teaches you to remember exactly what you hear and read! It gives you the confidence you need to make an important point at a business conference... to back up your opinion in discussions... become a leader in conversation, with dozens of interesting facts at your fingertips!

This book teaches you how to memorize a speech, or a sales presentation—in minutes! It teaches you how to remember every card played when you relax at night! It can improve your aim, or poker, or bridge game by



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one short evening—OR IT DOESN'T COST YOU A PENNY!

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Robert Coleman, New York Mirror, a swell party... The stellar entertainer was Harry Lorayne, billed as "The man who has the most phenomenal memory in the world." After watching Harry at work, we were inclined to agree with that statement!

Ruth Nurnis, WHNT, Virginia ... this book is fascinating reading... Harry Lorayne states this emphatically... **THESE IS NO SUCH THING AS A FOUR MEMORY... ONLY A TRAINED OR UNTRAINED MEMORY.** He shows in this fascinating book how to easily train your own memory to retain facts... figures... places... people and whatever you wish to remember... how to quickly memorize speeches or facts that you wish to remember for future use... I found **HOW TO DEVELOP A SUPER-POWER MEMORY** an experience in reading.

Ed Gilling, Pennsylvania Intelligencer, Have you ever wished you had a better memory? That you could remember names, places, things? Well, Sir, a new book just out is guaranteed to improve your memory and you will be able to amaze your friends with your feats of memory... **"HOW TO DEVELOP A SUPER-POWER MEMORY,"** by Harry Lorayne. The entire run will more than 700 persons by their first name after meeting them for the first time... The book contains the secret on how to be a good rememberer... If you're having trouble remembering a phone number or an anniversary give this book a try. It could make you happy, successful, rich.

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This book shows you how to improve the depth and force and power of your mind! It shows you how to double your vocabulary... learn dozens of ways to turn new words into your memory... learn their meanings without looking them up... repeat entire phrases, sentences, paragraphs from the great writers! You'll be able to learn a foreign language almost overnight—at least three to four times as quickly and easily as you could without this system! You'll be able to hear a joke, story or anecdote only once, and then repeat it in the same hilarious way!

Yes! And most important of all, this book will show you how to professionally organize your mind—do what you have to do in half the time! You'll remember dates, addresses, appointments—automatically! You'll carry dozens of telephone numbers in the file-cabinet of your mind! You'll stop going back over work two or three times because you'd forgotten something! Let us send you this book—and prove these facts to

Try It Entirely on My Risk!

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This book is a word-for-word copy of my regular mail-order course, which I sell for \$26. However, the book costs you only \$2.95! And I want you to try this book—in your own home—entirely on my risk! Here's how!

First, try for yourself the experiment I have described in this article! See for yourself the almost-unbelievable results in the very first evening alone! And then, continue to use the book for an additional week! In this very first week alone, if this amazing book doesn't do everything I say... if it doesn't give you a file-cabinet memory—to master what your age—no matter how poor you may think your memory is today—then simply return the book for every cent of your money back!

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MURDERER'S CHAIN

by
**WENZEL
BROWN**

IF MAUDIE had only given me the ten thousand dollars to invest in the Martian Development Company there would have been no reason to kill her. The money would have been more than tripled and my financial troubles would have been over. But Maudie has always been so unreasonable. Even though she grudgingly admitted that I had been right in the Martian venture, she still had no faith in my business judgment. She was as adamant as ever about parting with the smallest fraction of her vast fortune when I had the opportunity to step in on the ground floor of the Balsavius Six Mining Corporation.

Balsavius Six, in case you don't know, is the newest planet which Earth's space ships have touched. Everything about Balsavius has been kept strictly hush-hush. Only a handful of people have the slightest concept of the value of the new planet's mineral deposits. It just happened that one of the men in on the top secret was my friend Sylvester, and he was willing to cut me in on a slice of the corporation he was forming for as

little as five thousand dollars on the line.

The problem was how to get my hands on that much folding stuff. The answer should have been easy. Maudie (Mrs. Maude Terrain) was one of Earth's wealthiest women and, after all, Maudie was my mother-in-law. The trouble with Maudie was that she was narrow-minded, prejudiced, I might say bigoted. She liked to boast that her family have come from good, solid Earth stock from the beginning of time and, while she mingled with the socially elite from Venus, she considered Martians crude, and refused to entertain guests from what she described as "the minor planets."

Maudie's second trouble was that she was mean. Although her daughter, Isabelle, and I have been married for eight years, Maudie never did more than to provide us with a modest allowance. She always felt that I should work which, after all, is pretty nonsensical when there are so many ways for a man with a little capital to get rich quick.

Isabelle isn't like Maudie. She's

easy-going, pliant, susceptible to flattery and, on Maudie's death, Isabelle would inherit her full fortune. So with a deal like this in the offing, it didn't take any great brain to see that Maudie's rapid demise would remove the single obstacle that stood between myself and untold wealth.

The thought of killing Maudie had come often to my mind since my talk with Sylvester but the available weapons all seemed too crude. I'm a fastidious person and the idea of shooting or stabbing Maudie was just too vulgar. One of the more subtle poisons might have turned the trick, but certainly nothing as obvious as cyanide or arsenic. As for curare or belestion, to be frank, I hadn't the foggiest notion where to lay my hands on them.

That's the way things stood when I just happened to stop in front of the window of Melvin Rosy's House of Fantastic Jewelry in Greenwich Village. I'd passed by the shop many times but I'd never paused to look in. Of recent years, the Village has filled up with all sorts of peculiar people, Martians, Venusians and the little green men from outer space. One thing I'll have to hand to Maudie, she was right about calling some of these people uncouth. Some of the Galaxians really are riff-raff.

Out in front of the store were some long pink fliers advertising the jewelry within. I picked one up idly, for it had just occurred to me that Maudie's birthday was the next day and that it might not be a bad idea to soften her up with a gift. I looked at the monstrous chunks of jewelry in the display window—rings, bracelets and whatnots, decorated with staring eyes, floating amoebas and gilded kidneys. Maudie was a pushover for spectacular accoutrements but this stuff exceeded even her flamboyant taste.

Probably I would have walked on by if a couple of lines at the top of the flier hadn't caught my attention. They were written by some old time humorist called S. J. Perelman and he

described the jewelry as being like, "an egg balanced on a cone, an erg balanced on a bone, a hag balanced on a roan."

That last part seemed a perfect description of Maudie—"a hag balanced on a roan." Almost by instinct I started to climb the crooked stone steps to the shop. The door was open and the proprietor was standing behind the counter. Other than that the place was empty.

I'd seen Melvin Rosy around before. He was a big brute of a man with a shaggy red beard who sported a dangling jade earring in his left ear. I'd always suspected that Rosy had Martian blood but I'd never been sure until I glimpsed the little purple flecks in the lines of his palms that are a dead giveaway.

Rosy looked up and his gaze seemed to go right through me. Some of these Martian chaps have an uncanny skill at reading your mind. Rosy's voice was clear and soft but it had the timbre of some stringed instrument. He said, "A gift perhaps. For a woman?"

I nodded but I almost jumped out of my skin when he added, "For your mother-in-law, I should imagine. I'm sure I have just the thing."

He showed me a half dozen pendants and bracelets but I could see his heart wasn't in it. He was sizing me up, wanting to make sure of me before he offered the *piece de resistance*. I could feel excitement surging up inside of me, even though I had no notion of what he would bring forth.

Finally he went to the rear of the shop and disappeared behind a batik curtain. When he returned he held in his hand a heart-shaped box of deep-napped velvet, royal purple in color. He laid the box on the glass counter but his wide palm nearly covered it.

His eyes held mine and his thick lips quirked in a smile that was almost a grimace. He said, "I take it you want an extra-special gift. I might say a gift for the departing, even a fatal gift."

I gulped and nodded.

He raised the box and slipped the catch. The lid rose slowly on coiled hinges and I was staring at the most delicately wrought necklace I had ever seen. It was long and thin, no wider than a shoestring, and the clasp was a beautifully constructed replica of a snake's head. I looked at the intricate design of the narrow chain with wonder. Certainly it was not a product of Earth, I thought. Nowhere on this planet do we have craftsmen capable of such elaboration of minutiae.

Even more striking than the workmanship of the chain was its coloration. It was not gold, as I had first thought, but a metal unknown to me with a flame-like orange glow. My gaze was drawn away from the necklace by Rosy's soft chuckle.

"It is magnificent, is it not?"

"Yes," I said, "but far beyond my means. I had in mind some trifle—"

Rosy lifted a hand for silence and again I noticed the purple flecks in the palm. He said, "Nothing is too expensive for the woman you hate."

I began to stutter a protest but something in Rosy's expression stopped me. He spoke gently, as though humoring a child. "We do not need to discuss price. The necklace will make you a wealthy man. We can settle upon terms then."

"I don't understand."

"Ah, but you will," he said smiling. "You do not recognize the metal. There is nothing strange about that. Probably no man of Earth has ever seen it and lived. In Mars it has been given the name of Malutrex and, even there, it is both rare and extremely expensive because of its peculiar properties. In all, I doubt if more than a dozen such necklaces were made up. They are called,"—he stopped to underscore his point, "Murderer's Chains."

I think he expected me to ask why. But for some reason my throat was so

dry that I couldn't trust myself to speak.

"You will recall," he continued slowly, "that way back in the twentieth century when the Martians first came to Earth, they were not made exactly welcome. Our first space ships were fired upon and many of our people were killed. Our next step was secret infiltration. We landed our ships in deserts and other isolated spots and unloaded select groups to intermingle with the Earth people and, because we are a superior race, soon many of our representatives held important posts among the governments of the Earth, especially that of the United States. To these Martians fell the task of breaking down ancient prejudices so that Earth could be opened to unrestricted trade and immigration. This was not easy. The men of Earth still remained hostile to us and, when we were unmasked as Martians, many of us were imprisoned and some were beaten to death, even executed. The people of Earth were, as a whole, complacent but they were whipped up to a frenzy by scare-mongers and demagogues whose voices it became necessary to silence.

"Open retaliation would have done more harm than good and it was then that the Martians found the perfect weapon—Malutrex. This is a metal quite harmless to Martians for, as you know, our blood has a quite different composition than yours. We can handle Malutrex without the slightest danger. Look—" He reached down, coiled the slender chain about his wrist, caught the hook in the tongue-like catch of the delicate clasp then unloosened it again.

He smiled and was silent for a minute, studying my face. When he spoke again it was with slow deliberation. "Maybe, you remember hearing tales long ago of 'the silent death'. Certain isolationist Congressmen and Senators who spear-headed the opposition to interplanetary development died mysteriously and without visible

cause. Malutrex was the cause of their deaths."

I was culling out half-forgotten bits of information that I had learned as a schoolboy. "But how—"

Again the purple-flecked palm raised to interrupt me. "Earth men are hot-blooded. The chemical analysis of their bodies—but I won't bother you with the technicalities. In plain language, once a chain of Malutrex circles human flesh, it begins to shrink, slowly, almost invisibly. It grows tighter and tighter until it becomes a strangler's noose. And there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that the Earth man can do about it. Once the clasp is fastened, no matter how he tries, he cannot undo it nor, after a few minutes, can he loosen the chain from his skin. In most cases the victim is taken completely unaware by the death creeping upon him. Malutrex constricts gradually and painlessly except for the last spluttering moment of life."

My knees felt a little weak and my stomach queasy. "Why tell me? Why should you let me in on this secret?"

Rosy's smile became more intimate. "Mrs. Terrain is not exactly popular among Martians," he said softly. "If I remember correctly, she is the Chairman of the League to Oppose Interplanetary Marriage, and has financed the Earth Citizens Council to name only a few of the discriminatory organizations with which she has linked herself. Perhaps you, as her heir, could put her fortune to a better use."

"There's no doubt of that," I said.

"Well, then—"

"But I've no desire to be dissolved in the death ray chamber for murder."

"Nor is there any need to do so. Look, was a single one of our assassins caught?"

"But the necklace would be found embedded in her flesh."

He shook his head. "Perhaps I've not made the situation clear. The pumping of the heart, the warmth of the blood cause Malutrex to contract.

As soon as death sets in the necklace resumes its normal proportions. The clasp can be unfastened, the necklace removed, and as long as the ends do not meet it remains completely harmless."

I gulped again. Murder in the abstract is one thing; planned, cold-blooded murder is something else again. But Maudie dead, and all that money in my hands! Suddenly I laughed as I saw where my thoughts were leading me. The whole thing was a hoax of some kind.

As before, Rosy seemed to read my mind. He reached for my wrist and twisted the necklace about it. I stared at the delicate chain in fascination. As I watched, I could see the metal shrink, barely perceptibly, but certainly for all that. I clawed at the clasp and tried to unfasten it. It was utterly hopeless and swift panic swept over me. I grasped the slender chain and tried to wrench it free. It was tougher than finely tempered steel. Sweat popped out on my forehead and I could hardly repress a scream.

With a knowing nod of his head, Rosy leaned forward and lifted my wrist. He opened the catch with a lazy flick of his fingers. I was breathing hard and scared half out of my wits but I was caught in the trap that Rosy had set for me. Maudie dead, myself a millionaire, and no chance of being caught. This was too good to pass up. I knew it and so did Rosy. All we had to do was agree on terms. Half an hour later when I left the House of Fantastic Jewelry, the royal purple box with the Murderer's Chain lay in my pocket, beautifully gift-wrapped.

I had to lay my plans carefully but unwittingly Maudie and Isabelle conspired to make it easy. A dinner had been arranged at Maudie's apartment as a birthday celebration. The only other guests would be Sylvester and his wife. Maudie had been complaining of bad headaches of late and never liked to go out after dinner, but she

had purchased four tickets for the most popular play of the season, "The Fairest of Ladies", and insisted that the four of us should see it. She would rest while we were gone but would keep her light on so that Isabelle could come in to kiss her good-night.

Everything went like clockwork. I bought a little gift for Maudie and presented it to her early in the evening. The dinner was very gay and, just as we were about to leave, I announced that I had another gift. Maudie was delighted with the chain. I didn't even have to fasten it around her neck as I had planned. She snapped the clasp herself and went to the mirror in the foyer, preening and admiring herself and the necklace that winked and glittered in the light. I was the last one out of the door and Maudie clung to me for a minute, drawing my head down to kiss me. Maybe she'd softened up enough to lend me a few thousand, I thought, but even if she had, it was too late. I couldn't very well snatch the necklace back even if it were possible to release it from about her throat.

I don't remember much about the play. I was thinking of Maudie all the time and I was torn between all sorts of doubts and fears. One minute I'd be way down in the dumps and the next I'd be floating up in the clouds planning all the good times Isabelle and I could have with Maudie's millions. In my mind I'd see a picture of Maudie lying dead and then I'd decide that Rosy had conned me and Maudie would be as spry as ever when we got home. Sometimes I'd want it one way and sometimes the other. I was really mixed up and on edge.

The play seemed to last for about ten light years but actually it wasn't quite midnight when we caught a taxi outside the theatre. As soon as we rounded the corner and were in sight of the marquee of the apartment house, I knew something had gone wrong. Two red and white police cars blocked off the entrance of the house

and a curious throng of people had gathered around.

I'd expected to have a chance to retrieve the necklace before the police were called. In the confusion of discovering her body no one would notice or, even if some one did, it wouldn't appear particularly odd for me to unfasten the necklace and slip it in my pocket. After all, it would have been my last gift to her.

With the police already on the scene that part of the plan was out. Nothing was left except to play it by ear. We pushed our way through the curious idlers and the neighbors who'd come out into the halls. A cop was at the front door but as soon as we'd identified ourselves he ushered us into Maudie's big front room. Only two cops were there. I didn't get the smaller one's name but the towering man in plain clothes introduced himself as Lieutenant Onsett, of Central Homicide.

Just the mention of homicide was enough to give me the jitters bad but fortunately Isabelle stole the scene with a fit of hysterics that nearly blew the roof of the place. She distracted everyone with her screaming jag long enough for me to slip into the bedroom for a look at Maudie. She lay straight on the bed, her arms flung out, her face contorted and blue but not a mark on her throat.

What I wanted most was to get my hands on the necklace but when I drew close to her I could see that it was gone. I stood still, breathing hard, trying to collect my wits. Could the necklace have slipped off after death? I scanned the bed-clothes, the carpet beside the bed, the medicine table. No sign of it.

I hadn't heard anyone enter the room but when I looked up, I found myself staring into the pale gray eyes of Lieutenant Onsett. His face wore an official mask of blankness but it was belied by the quirk of his lips. He knew something, I thought, or at least he was suspicious. I had to take a firm

grip on myself not to make a break for it and try to rush past him to the freedom of the hall.

Onsett motioned me back to the front room. Isabelle had quieted down although she was still sobbing. Sylvester and his wife were sitting on the divan holding hands and looking distraught. I went to Isabelle and slid my arms around her and waited to see what would come next.

The questioning was all very polite, in perfect order. The details of the birthday dinner and the theatre party came out. We learned, in turn, that a friend of Maudie's who had a key to the apartment had dropped in to surprise her with a birthday gift and had discovered the body. There was some mention of the necklace but neither Onsett nor his partner pursued the matter. I was beginning to feel cocky again, sure that Maudie's death would be put down to accidental strangulation or a heart attack.

In about an hour we were all told that we could leave but just as we got to the door, Onsett called me back and asked me to wait. Sylvester offered to take Isabelle home and I didn't dare to protest too much. I stood in the middle of the room, listening to their footsteps die away in the hall and then I turned to face Onsett. His partner had disappeared and the two of us were alone in the room.

He sat down in an easy chair and crossed his legs. There wasn't anything for me to do but try to appear as much at ease as he. We sat there in silence for long minutes. Finally Onsett dug out a cigarette and offered me one. I took it and lit up. The smoke burned my throat but having something to do with my hands helped.

I was scared but I reckoned that the best thing to do was put on a show of indignation. "What is this?" I blustered. "I've told you everything I know."

He gave a thin smile. "I don't think so, Mr. Duff."

"I don't care what you think, I've nothing more to say."

He snuffed out his cigarette very carefully in one of Maudie's little mosaic ashtrays and slowly his hand dipped into his pocket. When it came out, the necklace dangled from his fingers.

I could feel my heart lurch but I still tried to bluff it out, complaining about being separated from Isabelle. Onsett didn't say a word, just dangled the chain so that the light from the lamp rippled along its slender surface.

In a few minutes I ran out of words. Onsett gave a deep sigh and rose from his chair.

"Do you want to tell me about this little gift to your mother-in-law?"

I clamped my lips shut. "I'm through. Finished. I'll not say another word."

The quirk of his lips reminded me of Melvin Rosy. He raised the chain over my head and the next thing I knew it was about my throat. My fingers scrambled for it but I couldn't pry it loose. I gave up and stared at Onsett in stunned silence. His hands were still outstretched and as I looked up at them, I could see the tiny purple flecks in his palms. I couldn't believe it. Not at first. Whoever heard of a Martian making the New York Police force? But when he spoke, his voice had dropped its growl. It was soft and musical, a Martian voice.

He said, "I think you're going to tell me everything I want to know. You'll write it all down too."

Like I said before, it's really uncanny the way some of these Martian chaps can read your mind. He was right, straight down the line, I told him everything. I wrote it all down and didn't waste any time about it because every second the necklace was growing smaller and smaller.

When I finished, I signed it and pushed it over to him.

Here it is.

AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

Magazines in this field are often said to reflect the personalities or to echo the individual idiosyncracies of their editors. That they do so is debatable—with, admittedly, one exception—for most of us must keep in mind that we are not editing for ourselves but for you out there who represent a dozen diverse likes and dislikes and who may differ from us on many many issues.

This does not rule out the possibility that we can sit down together, in the American tradition, and explore ideas—challenging and even disturbing ideas—which may conceivably become the facts of Tomorrow. Lester del Rey's latest article, *SKIES OF INFAMY*, is in this category.

Neither this writer nor this magazine necessarily agree with some of Lester del Rey's conclusions, but these are challenging conclusions—challenging views and opinions shared by many scientists—which merit our attention whether or not we may agree with them individually.

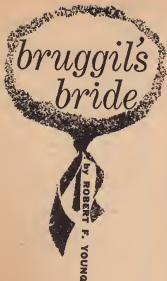
In addition to Lester del Rey's article, we bring you this month—the first instalment of Fredric Brown's exciting new novel, *THE MIND THING*, —unusual fantasy and science fiction by Wenzell Brown, Robert F. Young, Jorge Luis Borges (the distinguished Mexican writer), George O. Smith and Robert Bloch, —a special feature on a *TWO-MAN SPACE CABIN*, published here through the courtesy of the Office of Information, USAF Aerospace Medical Center (ATC) at Brooks Air Force Base, —*FANNOTATIONS*, another column by Belle C. Dietz, —*THE ABOMINABLE COALMAN*, a footnote to last month's article on the Abominable Snowman, by Ivan T. Sanderson, —and *ISRAEL'S LUNAR PROBE*, by Shalom Cohen, originally published in the January 9, 1959 issue of *The Jerusalem Post*, of Jerusalem, Israel, and published here by permission of that paper.

The New Year is a matter of hours away as I write this. Needless to say I wish all of you all possible happiness during this coming year—the first in what History may eventually describe as the "Space '60's".....

HANS STEFAN SANTESSON



BY WIMBLY MACE



SHE CAME off the Androids, Inc., production line in September, 2241. She was five feet, seven inches tall, weighed 135 pounds, had flaxen hair and pale blue eyes. Her built-in batteries were guaranteed for ten years, her tapes were authentic Kirsten Flagstad, and her name was Isolde.

She was shipped to New York via strato-freight, and late in October she opened the season at the Metropolitanette in what the hundred or so die-hard enthusiasts still holding the Wagnerian fort, called the best Tristan ever. Afterwards, she was deactivated and stored away, along with Tristan, Brangane, Melot, King Marke, Kurvenal, the shepherd and

the helmsman, and the various knights, soldiers, attendants, and sailors that constituted the rest of the *dramatis personae*.

At that time the black market in androids was relatively new, and only standard measures were taken to guard the Metropolitanette storeroom. Operatic androids were not exactly the kind of merchandise the average twenty-third century citizen liked most to find underneath his Christmas tree, and to a Wagnerian aficionado, the idea of the average music lover stealing one was as preposterous as the idea of a twentieth century bobby soxer stealing a Caruso original. But an operatic android was potentially capable of doing other things besides singing recitative and arias—as a number of twenty-third century operators had begun to realize some time before the beginning of this history. Hans Becker was one of them.

You've seen Hans. You've seen him in bars and on airbusses, in waiting rooms and in automats. He likes to sit in secluded corners and study people through his cigar smoke. He has a penchant for ostentatious blondes and dirty comic films. He has a passion for the quick credit.

You see him now. He is talking to a mousy little man in a decrepit bar off Fifth Avenue. The little man nods every now and then, smiles a satisfied smile every time Hans sets him up a beer. The little man is a night watchman. He is a night watchman in the very building where the Metropolitanette stores its deactivated androids. He is in his fifties, and he too likes ostentatious blondes. But on a night watchman's pay, the only ones he can

afford are a little too ostentatious even for him. He would like them to be a little less ostentatious, and, if possible, a little younger. He smiles, nods his head again. He drinks the fresh beer the bartender sets before him. He licks the froth from his lips with the tip of his gray tongue. He pockets the sheaf of credits which Hans slips him. He nods again. "Tomorrow night, then," he says. "At the backdoor. I'll have her ready for you."

Isolde's first stop, after her abduction, was at the house of a converter Hans knew. The converter's name was Wisprey, and he was an artist in his own right. By the time he finished with Isolde, you never would have dreamed—unless you were a Wagnerian devotee—that once upon a time she had been a bona fide reproduction of an Irish heroine in a German opera. You would have sworn, instead, that she was a Swedish-type maid of the kind Androids, Inc., specialized in, and which retailed for 2500 credits. Her flaxen hair had been drawn back into a little chignon, her period costume had been exchanged for a modern servant's outfit, and her classic features had been subtly altered to suggest sycophancy. As though that were not enough, she could scrub floors, wash dishes, cook, and darn socks.

The only part of her the converter did not alter was the sealed-in unit containing her voice tapes. That, he told Hans, would have involved too intricate an operation. Besides, who cared if she sang instead of talked, anyway, as long as she could work?

"That's right," Hans said. "Who cares? When they see how strong she is, they'll buy her like sixty."

"Sure they will."

"And she's only the first. There's lots of other big ones where she came from and I'm going to grab them off, too."

He didn't grab them off, though. A

week later, he fell into his blonde mistress' barbecue pit and was so drunk he couldn't get back out before he was barbecued to the bone. Before this lamentable occurrence, however he sold his pilfered princess to an interstellar trader, and thereby launched Isolde upon her odyssey.

The interstellar trader, whose name was Higgins, owned a Class B merchant ship of the old photon-ejection variety. He stored Isolde in the afterhold and left her there till his fourth planetfall—Sirius 21. Then he got her out, dusted her off, combed her hair and activated her. He led her down the gangplank and stood her on the collapsible auctioneer's block he'd set up at the ship's base. There were a number of colonists gathered around the block already, but he saved her till last, auctioning off the rest of his payload first. By the time he took her hand and led her to the center of the block, word of her presence had got around the nearby colony, and there was a near-maximum turnout.

"All right," Higgins said. "She's beautiful and she's strong and she's sturdy. I don't need to tell you those things because you can see them for yourself. I'm merely reminding you of them. But what you can't see are the things she can do. So here's the way we'll work it: you name something you'd like a servant of yours to be able to do, and I'll tell you whether she can do it or not. Who's first?"

"Can she cook?" a thin-faced woman wanted to know.

"I knew you'd ask that one first. The answer is yes. Next?"

"Can she milk a milch bront?" This time the asker was a middle-aged colonist of Dutch descent.

Higgins consulted a small notebook. "She can—if a milch bront is enough like a cow," he said presently.

There was the inevitable drunk in the crowd. "Can she keep a man's bed warm?"

Higgins played along. "She sure

can, buddy, but you know the law as well as I do."

"Can she scrub floors, lift, carry, wash clothes, do dishes and wait on people?" It was the Dutch colonist again.

Higgins nodded. "Seems to me you've just about covered everything, friend. Want to make the first bid?"

"200 credits," the Dutch colonist said.

"I have 200 credits," Higgins intoned, "which, if I do say so, is about one tenth of what she's worth? Do I hear three?"

"300," the drunk said.

"350," the Dutch colonist said.

"450."

The Dutch colonist could outbid anybody in the crowd, and everybody in the crowd knew it, including the drunk. But the drunk didn't give a damn, and he went along to the one thousand mark before dropping out. The Dutch colonist got her for 1100 credits, and the first stage of Isolde's servitude began.

The Dutch colonist's name was Vanderzee. You've seen him, too. Forget about his race: his race has nothing to do with it. All races have their Vanderzees. This one was a bachelor, and made a prosperous living buying seconds in large lots and selling them for firsts. The business he happened to be in was the clothing business, but no matter what business he had been in, he would have conducted it in the same way. There were Vanderzees in the time of Gautama Siddhartha; there were Vanderzees in the time of Christ; there were Vanderzees in the time of FDR. There will always be Vanderzees.

This one took his purchase home in a ground skimmer. He looked at her sideways as they skimmed along, a little awed by her classic features, which even the converter's skill had been unable to destroy altogether. By the time they reached the apartment above his store, the first droppings of

his sense of inferiority had already fertilized the ground where his latent hatred lay, and when he asked her a simple question, the hatred burst forth in twisted stems and ugly blossoms. For, instead of answering the question with the simple "yes sir" or "no sir" which was all it required, Isolde responded with the particular recitative it most closely provoked, and the windows rattled in the majestic blast from her Kirsten Flagstad tapes, Vanderzee, for all his shrewdness, had neglected to make the most obvious inquiry of all from Higgins, re his prospective purchase—i.e., *Can she talk?*

But Vanderzee didn't take her back. For one thing, he knew that Higgins had already closed his lock and would be blasting off any second. For another, taking her back would have been a tacit admission that he had been outwitted by a business man sharper than himself, and this he could not bear. No, Vanderzee had made a purchase, and he would stick with it: but he would get his money's worth out of it if it took him the rest of his life.

Isolde was put to work with a vengeance. Each dawn she milked the milch hront Vanderzee kept in the shed behind his store. Each day she washed dishes, cooked, scrubbed floors, waited on customers and unloaded supplies for Vanderzee. Each evening she washed dishes, cooked, scrubbed floors, waited on customers and unloaded supplies for Lanesce, the local tavern keeper to whom Vanderzee sublet her for part time work. But in this subsidiary attempt to get all he could out of her, and in the getting of it, obtain his revenge on her for having deceived him (by the end of the second week, Vanderzee actually had himself believing that it was she, and not Higgins, who had put one over on him), Vanderzee made a mistake.

It was a natural enough mistake. Who would have dreamed that an an-

droid who screamed or sang gibberish (German was a dead language by 2241 in any but the most esoteric sense, and Vanderzee was generations removed from his native tongue) could attain to any degree of popularity whatsoever in any kind of an establishment whatsoever. But taverns are not ordinary establishments, and frequently events come to pass in them that could never have come to pass elsewhere. Isolde became popular. She became so popular, in fact, that Lanescé's business doubled. Tripled.

There was nothing unprecedented about her popularity. Idiot waitresses have always enjoyed an exalted place in taverns. They make ideal patsies for jokes, for one thing, and are generally responsive to gooses, for another. While Isolde was neither an idiot nor responsive to gooses, the sounds she uttered whenever anyone said something to her, obscene or otherwise, were suggestive enough of idiot rantings to the ear of the average patron, for her to be classified as an idiot; and while she may not have been responsive to gooses, neither was she on her guard against them, taking them in her stride like everything else. None of which bears directly on the nature of Vanderzee's mistake. What does bear directly upon it is the fact that the variety of men who frequent bars, is infinite. Sooner or later someone had to come along who would recognize Isolde, either from her recitative or from her arias, or from her appearance, for what she was—or what she once had been. And presently someone did.

Enter, Elwood Parkhurst. You've seen him, too. In bars, mostly. But before he took exclusively to bars, you may have seen him in *avantgarde* ghettos where the philosophy of Rieder and Diems and Ghent lay thick in smoke-fogged atmospheres, or in off-beat book stores where the *outré* tomes of Cresniner and Hulp and

Bredder pre-empted the shelves. And you may have seen him, too, if you happened along at the right time, standing impatiently in front of the Metropolitanette, smoking concatenations of cigarettes till the doors opened and egress to Verdi or Wagner could be obtained. And were you worldly enough, you may have seen him waiting outside the stage door behind the old Libido with a host of the macromammary Miranda's other pursuers, and you may even have read about the short-lived marriage he and she embarked on to the delight of the Sex Sheets and the Peeping Walters. After that, though, if you saw him at all, you saw him in bars—or staggering between them.

Parkhurst walked into Lanescé's, took one look at Isolde and knew her instantly.

He was sobering up at the time, having hit Sirkus 21 a week ago, and the Spaceport Bar five minutes after arrival. Perhaps he would have acted as he did even if he hadn't been sobering up, but there is a certain kind of remorse contained in the sobering-up process that makes the sufferer more than normally susceptible to symbols of the higher planes of civilization. In Isolde, Parkhurst saw the strength he needed at the moment, and the *raison d'être* he would need later on to straighten out permanently. Before he even heard her voice raised in resounding recitative, as he did shortly when one of the good fellows present, goosed her, he knew he had to have her.

He didn't have enough capital to buy her, but he did have enough to abscond with her to Procyon 16 where a boom was in progress and where you could practically name your job. As Vanderzee kept Isolde quartered in the shed with his milch bront, abduction proved to be no problem, and Parkhurst managed to smuggle her on board a Procyon-bound tramp ship

without any trouble.

On Procyon 16, however, misfortune awaited him: the ulwano herds which the good colonists had been systematically slaughtering for years in order that wealthy women all over the civilized sector of the galaxy might know the secure feeling that accompanies owning an ulwano coat or stole, and in order that the good colonists themselves might know the secure feeling that accompanies owning acres of real estate and scads of stock in interstellar banks, had perversely migrated into the inaccessible northern barrens, thereby precipitating a depression. Jobs were not merely scarce: they were non-existent. Even worse, Parkhurst didn't have enough money to buy passage back.

In common with most men of his kind, he could meet a crisis in one way, and in one way only. He had not taken a drink since Sirius 21, but as soon as the seriousness of his predicament got through to him, he headed straight for the Star and Traveler—a thriving little establishment convenient to the spaceport, dedicated to the enhancement of human relationships via the congenial consumption of cut-rate gin. The money he had left lasted him two days. His watch got him through two more. His extra clothing was going for three more. By that time, his physical thirst was sated; his emotional thirst, however, was merely stimulated. He had only one item left to sell, besides the clothes on his back, and so he sold Isolde—for one tenth of what she was worth, and without ever having heard her sing the aria which he loved above all others and which she had been created for most: the *Liebested*. Three days later, when he had sobered sufficiently to realize what he had done, he hanged himself.

Isolde's new owner was a missionary named Newell. He was dedicated to the task of bringing all the heathen

in the known galaxy around to seeing things in their proper perspective, i.e., the way he saw them. He was a devout disciple of Neo-Christianity, popularly known as FDRism, which had begun late in the twentieth century and which proclaimed Franklin Delano Roosevelt as the real Christ. He owned his own ship—the NRA—and he carried a collapsible chapel in the hold. As he was unmarried and as most of the lands he visited turned out to be lonely as well as hostile, he bought Isolde to keep him company—and, of course, to keep the ship clean, do the cooking and darn his socks.

His first—and last—stop after leaving Procyon 16 was Idwandana, a primitive province on the southernmost continent of Gamma Bootis 4. The natives were a rusty brown in hue, stood on an average of five feet in height, used a glue-like mixture on their scarlet hair to make it stand up straight, and lived off the pweitl—a cow-like creature whose milk they drank, whose flesh they ate and whose hides they used for lap-laps, tepees and gourds. Occasionally, they varied their diet by eating each other.

The particular tribe Newell chose for his initial ministrations took a dim view of FDRism right from the start. Taking from the rich and giving to the poor was a practice they indulged in habitually, providing that the "rich" were their enemies and the "poor" were themselves; but they could see no religious connection in the matter. Old Age Security they considered impractical, and sick benefits for incapacitated members of the community, left them cold. When an Idwandanan grew too old, he or she was cooked and eaten. If he or she became a detriment to the tribe because of illness or accident, he or she was also cooked and eaten. So it always was, so should ever be. There was only one god, and he was Bruggil, the giant who lived in the fire mountain and whose fiery breath you could

sometimes see when he went into a tantrum.

If the Reverend Newell had been a realistic person, he would have folded up his chapel then and there, and took off for home. But then, if he had been a realistic person, he wouldn't have been trying to shove his credo down the throats of a race of savages who would just as soon eat him as look at him.

He did not see the arrow till it was already protruding from his chest, and then he saw it only briefly. He fell, appropriately enough, in the doorway of the collapsible chapel he had come to love the way some men love women and the way other men love wine. But here the appropriateness ended: the Idwandanans streaked out of the surrounding forest and quartered him neatly, whereupon they swarmed up the ladder to the ship's lock in search of the creature whom they believed to be his mate. Isolde was in the galley, fixing breakfast, and it was no trick at all for the foremost Idwandanan to creep up behind her and plunge his knife between her shoulder blades. It was a long knife, and a sharp one—the best that the *beche-demer* trader who supplied the area, had in stock—and it went all the way through and came out between her synthetic breasts. The Idwandanan felt pretty proud of himself, till she turned around and confronted him, whereupon he ran screaming from the room.

He returned presently with several of his fellows, among them Skonsdoggugil, the chief. There was a prolonged palaver, after which Isolde's would-be executioner approached her and withdrew the knife. It had done no damage whatsoever, even missing the small bellows that kept her chest rising and falling in a rhythmic and realistic imitation of human breathing. As for the holes it had made, her skir-plastic was of the self-sealing type, and grew together forthwith.

The bodice of the gingham dress Newell had outfitted her with, concealed this additional miracle from the eyes of the Idwandanans, but Skonsdoggugil had seen enough: here was Bruggil's Bride, sent down from the fire mountain by ways incomprehensible to man, to test the mettle of his children.

They built a temple for her deep in the forest, laboriously quarrying the stone and dragging it through underbrush and vine to the chosen site. Isolde watched, or seemed to be watching, and every now and then she gave forth with recitative or aria. The Idwandanans interpreted these outbursts as admonitions to hurry, and because of them, the temple was completed much sooner than it otherwise would have been. After a lengthy ceremony, officiated by Skonsdoggugil, Isolde was escorted inside and seated upon a crude throne, after which a guard of honor was installed without. By now, her goddesshood was unquestioned by even the most cynical. Was she not above such worldly necessities as eating and drinking? Had anyone ever seen her sleep? Oh, she was Bruggil's Bride all right, and woe to the Idwandanan male who failed to make his obeisance at her feet each time he slaughtered a pweitl, and woe to the Idwandanan female who failed to attend the fertility fete which was held each night in the courtyard!

Isolde reigned in the temple for five Earth-years, and she probably would have gone right on reigning there till her batteries gave out and her tapes went dead and the little in-built motor of her heart ceased to whirl if a certain native labor recruiter named Jose Swenson had not landed in the *Malaita* to pick up a payload of Idwandanans. As it was, her reign came to an abrupt end.

Jose Swenson was a far cry from the Reverend Newell: his business

was selling souls, not saving them, and he knew his business well. He had not been in Idwandana a week before he had his hold jam-packed with "fire-heads," and he would have been away and gone an hour hence if, during one of his forays into the forest, he had not glimpsed the crude stone temple.

In Swenson's mind, temples, even crude stone ones, were always potential sources of treasure. After all, who really knew but what there were gold mines in Idwandana? Perhaps even diamond mines? And what more logical place was there for a race of superstitious savages to store the bounty gleaned therefrom than in their temple?

So instead of departing, he set forth once more into the forest, with six members of his crew, leaving the remaining three members to guard the *Malaita*. This was a tactical blunder, arising from his mistaken assumption that by now, all of the Idwandanans would be too terrified of stun grenades to cause any serious trouble. As a matter of fact, most of them were, but Skonsdoggugil wasn't, and reinforced by several tribal units from the north, with whom his own tribe claimed kinship, he attacked the *Malaita* as soon as Swenson and his party were out of earshot.

The attack went well, so well, in fact, that the three crew members were neatly quartered on the deck before any of them had a chance to radio Swenson of the disaster. Skonsdoggugil wasted no time: after freeing the prisoners in the hold and instructing them to guard the ship, he armed his warriors with stun grenades stolen from the arsenal, and set out in pursuit of Swenson.

Swenson had made good time, and was already within attacking distance of the temple. A stun grenade knocked out half the honor guard and sent the other half streaking for the forest. Swenson headed for the entrance. He could feel the diamonds

trickling through his fingers. He could taste the rich wine they would buy, and the luscious lips of the lovely women they would give him access to. He burst into the throne room, hardly able to contain himself—

And saw Isolde.

The Idwandanans had clothed her in their choicest of pweiti hides, and she had gone back to combing her hair in its original style. Her pale blue eyes were clear and unwavering. The classic body with which Androids, Inc., had endowed her was unsullied by either time or the elements. Swenson had been born in space and had spent most of his life in space. He had never been to Earth, and he had never seen an android. Consequently, he mistook Isolde for a real woman—a woman of heroic proportions, perhaps, but a woman radiant with the beauty he had looked for all his life and never found, till now.

Swenson forgot about the diamonds. He forgot about the gold. He stepped forward, touched Isolde's arm. The normal human temperature which her thermostat maintained, felt natural to his fingers. The softness of her synthetic skin made his flesh tingle. "A white goddess," he said. "A genuine honest-to-God white goddess!"

The burst of recitative which his remark provoked, disconcerted him for a moment. He had heard many languages in his day, but he had never heard one with such a violent intonation or such guttural syllables. Isolde, he concluded, must come from a world he had never touched upon in all his travels—a world remote from the ordinary pathways of man. And he was right, too, though in a way he did not dream.

At this point, a dull explosion sounded in the courtyard without, followed by another. Instantly alert, Swenson ran to the entrance—saw the six men who had accompanied him, lying stunned on the flagstones. Even as he looked, a horde of "fireheads"

streamed out of the forest, long knives glittering. The quartering was accomplished in a matter of seconds.

Sickened, Swenson ran back into the temple. There was a wide aperture in the rear wall, and the better part of valor, he knew, would be to forget the white goddess, whom the natives would not harm anyway, and gain the forest. The Idwandanans' possession of stun grenades unmistakably indicated that they had taken the *Malaita*, but perhaps he could eke out an existence till another ship came. In any event, burdening himself with a woman, however robust she might be, would be detrimental to his success.

Thus he reasoned, but thus he did not act. When the first Idwandanans gained the temple, Bruggil's Bride was gone.

The heavy underbrush fought their footsteps, and Swenson had to keep a constant drag on Isolde's arm, else she would not have accompanied him at all. The shouts of their pursuers grew louder by the second. When they came to a river, he plunged into it unhesitatingly, pulling Isolde after him. She could not swim, of course, but he was an expert, and in a matter of minutes they were in midstream. If he had known that for all her "breathing", she could not drown, their progress would have been more rapid. Even so, they had nearly reached the opposite bank when the first of the Idwandanans emerged from the forest. By the time dugouts were brought up so that the chase could be resumed (the Idwandanans could not swim), Swenson had scrambled up the bank and pulled Isolde out of sight into the underbrush.

He ran straight ahead for about half a mile, clasping Isolde's hand in his urging her along beside him. Then he turned at right angles and ran for another half mile. Finally he headed back for the river, swam across with Isolde, and plunged into the forest

again. He halted for a moment to get his breath, then went on. As nearly as he could figure out, his course of action had been the one they would have least expected him to take, and the fact that no further sounds of pursuit reached his ears indicated that he was right. Unless the Idwandanans were better trackers than he thought they were, he and Isolde now had a good chance of eluding them altogether.

They spent the night in a small clearing deep in the forest, sleeping upon the ground. Swenson was exhausted and he took it for granted that Isolde was too. In the middle of the night he awoke and was surprised at how cold it was. Isolde lay motionless a few feet from him, starlight pale on her flaxen hair. He sat up, took off his coat and covered her arms and shoulders. He was startled to see that her blue eyes were open, and for a moment he had the impression that she had not slept at all. She looked up at him, as though trying to understand his presence, or perhaps his actions. Swenson did an unprecedented thing for him: he found her hand and pressed it in his. "Everything's going to be all right," he whispered, and lay down on the ground beside her and fell back to sleep.

In the morning they went on. Swenson was famished, but dared not eat any of the berries and fruits they came across occasionally. Isolde ignored them completely. In the afternoon they came to a large grassy clearing, and Swenson was astonished to see a New Deal chapel sitting in the middle of it. Beside the chapel stood a small but staunch spaceship. By squinting his eyes, he was able to make out its name: the *NRA*.

He could hardly contain his excitement, and started running across the clearing, Isolde at his side. But Skonsdoggugil, remembering Bruggil's Bride's connection with the ship, had gambled that she and her captor would show up in its vicinity sooner or later, and his warriors were ready

and waiting in the New Deal chapel. They came pouring out as soon as Swenson and Isolde reached the base of the ship, and charged, waving their razor-edged blades.

Swenson started Isolde up the ladder, then turned and drew his knife-ray. He cut furiously, and "fireheads" fell like flies. But one of them managed to get through, and when Swenson finally ascended the ladder, he was minus a forearm.

Half fainting, he activated the lock, which the Idwandanans had accidentally closed and had been unable to reopen, and pulled Isolde inside. At the forest's edge Skonsdoggugil was mustering another contingent of warriors. Swenson pulled Isolde into the ship proper, secured the outer and inner locks. With her help, he got a tourniquet on the stump of his arm. Everything was swimming before his eyes by then, but he managed to gain the control room and strap Isolde and himself onto the two acceleration couches. He had one chance, and one chance only: to reach civilization before he bled to death. Hastily he calculated the co-ordinates of the nearest civilized planet, and fed them into the automatic pilot. He activated the pilot just before he blacked out.

It was his haste that was his undoing. The planet he had wanted was Delta Bootis 11, and the NRA should have snapped out of transphotic within orbiting distance in less than three objective days. On the fourth day, however, they were still in f.t.l. drive.

Swenson knew by then that he was dying. What he did not know was that Isolde was dying, too. Constant usage had depleted her batteries long before their guarantee was due to run out, and there was very little life left in them. But she showed no signs of her approaching demise, preparing his meals in the galley each day and bringing them to the control room where he still lay upon the acceleration couch. She even fed him as he

grew weaker, and once he roused briefly from a long stupor to find her darning his socks.

Co-ordinates, once fed into an automatic pilot, could not be cancelled; but automatic pilots were so constructed that whenever they received non-planetary co-ordinates, they altered them to the co-ordinates of the inhabitable planet which most closely corresponded to them. The NRA, therefore, could not end up in planetless space.

As the days passed, Swenson began wondering what kind of a world they were approaching, and whether he would ever see it or not. On the sixth day, his questions were answered when the NRA emerged from transphotic in the midst of a multiple aun system, near a gray and foreboding sphere. He pretended as long as he could that there was life on it, but when the a.p. put the ship into orbit, he could pretend no longer. Inhabitable did not always mean inhabited, and those cold gray seas and barren continents drifting past the viewport had been dead for ages. Whoever had lived on this world had long since absconded to a warmer, less hostile, milieu.

The a.p. brought them down to a gentle landing on a rocky coast near one of the seas. It was night, but in the heavens the mother sun's three distant sisters blazed in blue and beautiful splendor, drenching the sea and the land, filtering through the viewport and filling the control room with cold, unwavering light. In its radiance, Isolde's face lost all of the sycophancy the converter had superimposed upon it and became once more the classic face of the Irish-German heroine it was meant to represent.

Looking at her, Swenson knew true beauty for the first and last time in his life. He tried to sit up on the couch, sank back. The blue light faded, and red light took its place. Grad-

ually, that faded too, and lightlessness tiptoed around him on silent feet.

Isolde knelt beside him, looked down into his tired face. Slowly, she got up, and left the room. She touched the button that opened the locks and stepped out upon the little platform Newell once had used for a pulpit. She looked up at the stars.

Perhaps it was the expression that had come over Swenson's face just before he died; perhaps it was the way he lay upon the couch. Perhaps it was the kindnesses he had shown her, and the light that had come into his eyes whenever she had brought him food, or held his hand, or darned his socks. Perhaps it was the sound of the surf upon the forlorn shore. Perhaps it was all of these things...

Tristan lies dead now, in his castle by the sea. Brangane has made her revelation. King Marke has cried out in anguish and despair. "*Todt denn Alles—Alles tod!*"

Isolde presses her hands together on her breast. She drops them slowly to her sides. The blue radiance of the distant suns has transformed her

coarse garment of hides into a robe fit for the princess that she is. Her face, in her vast sorrow, has attained new pinnacles of beauty—

"*Tristan!*" The magnificent Flagstad voice rises into the radiance of the blue suns.

Slowly, brokenly, Isolde begins the *Liebestod*—

"*So might we die as ne'er to part...*"

She hears the orchestra take up the themes of bliss, of parting; of transfiguration. She blends her voice into the music. The poignant colonnades of sound rise higher and ever higher into the stars, and when the climax is reached on a heart-rending surge of sound, the blue suns tremble in the sky.

Slowly, Isolde turns and re-enters the ship. She sinks down upon Tristan's breast, just as the little armature in her heart makes one final revolution and lies still. In the background of her fading brain, the music returns briefly to the themes of her magic and of her yearnings, dies gently away...

The curtain falls.

JUST AS WE WERE ABOUT TO GO TO PRESS, IVAN T. SANDERSON TELEPHONED TO SAY THAT HE WAS COMPLETELY REWRITING HIS NEXT ARTICLE ABOUT THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN IN VIEW OF STARTLING NEWS WHICH HAD JUST REACHED HIM FROM ABROAD. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN FOUR YEARS THAT I HAVE TOLD YOU TO GO OUT TONIGHT AND MAKE SURE OF GETTING NEXT MONTH'S FANTASTIC UNIVERSE. I DO SO NOW! YOU WILL THANK ME FOR THIS!

HANS STEFAN SANTESSON

the REJECTED SORCERER

by JORGE LUIS BORGES

IN SANTIAGO there once was a dean who had a consuming desire to learn the art of magic. He heard that Don Illan of Toledo was more versed in it than anyone else, so he set out for Toledo to find him.

The day that he arrived he went directly to Don Illan's house and found him reading a book in a room set apart from his home. The latter received him with good will and bade him put aside the motive of his visit until after eating. He showed him to pleasant quarters and told him that he was very pleased by his arrival. After the meal, the dean disclosed to him the reason for his visit and requested that he instruct him in the science of magic. Don Illan told him he had divined that he was a dean, a man of good position and good fortune, but that he feared that afterward he would be forgotten by him. The dean gave his promise and his assurance that he would never forget the favor, and that he would be always at his service. With the matter now arranged, Don Illan explained that the

magic arts could be learned only in a remote place, and, taking him by the hand, led him to an adjoining room on the floor of which there was a large iron ring. He then told the servant girl to prepare partridges for supper, but not to put them on to roast until he so requested. Between them the two men pulled up on the iron ring and descended so far along a carved stone stairway that it seemed to the dean that the very river bed of the River Tajo must be over their heads. At the foot of the stairway there was a cell and then a library and then a sort of study containing instruments of magic. They began to go through the books, and were engaged in this, when two men entered with a letter for the dean, written by his uncle the bishop, who made it known to him that he was very sick and that he should not delay in coming if he wished to find him alive.

This news greatly annoyed the dean, on the one hand because of the suffering of his uncle, and on the other because it meant interrupting his

studies. He chose to write his apologies which he sent to the bishop. Three days later some men in mourning arrived, carrying other letters for the dean in which it was learned that the bishop had died, that a successor was being elected, and that it was hoped through the grace of God that the dean himself would be elected. They said also that he should not trouble himself to come, since it seemed preferable that he be elected *in absentia*.

Ten days later there arrived two pages in rich dress who threw themselves at his feet and kissed his hand, and greeted him as bishop. When Don Illan saw these things, he approached the new prelate with great joy and told him that he praised God that such good news should have come to his house. Then he requested the vacant deanship for one of his sons. The bishop made it known to him that he had reserved the deanship for his own brother, but that he had decided still to treat him favorably, and that they should depart together for Santiago.

The three went to Santiago, where they were received with honors. Six months later the bishop received messengers from the Pope who was offering him the archbishopric of Tolosa, leaving in his hands the naming of his successor. When Don Illan heard of this, he reminded him of the former promise and requested the title for his son. The archbishop made it known to him that he had reserved the bishopric for his own uncle, his father's brother, but that he had decided still to treat him favorably and that they should depart together for Tolosa. Don Illan had no choice but to accept.

The three went to Tolosa where they were received with honors and masses. Two years later, the arch-

bishop received messengers from the Pope who was offering him the office of cardinal, leaving in his hands the naming of his successor. When Don Illan heard of this, he reminded him of the former promise and requested the title for his son. The Cardinal made it known to him that he had reserved the archbishopric for his own uncle, his mother's brother, but that he had decided still to treat him favorably and that they should depart together for Rome. The three went to Rome where they were received with honors, masses, and processions. Four years later the Pope died and our cardinal was elected to the papacy by the others. When Don Illan heard of this he kissed the feet of His Holiness, reminded him of the former promise and requested the cardinalship for his son. The Pope threatened him with imprisonment, saying to him that he knew quite well that he was nothing more than a sorcerer and that in Toledo he had been a professor of magic arts. The unhappy Don Illan said that he was going to return to Spain, and he asked him for something to eat along the road. The Pope refused the request. Then Don Illan (whose face strangely had become younger) said in a firm voice:

"Well, then, I'll have to eat the partridges I ordered for tonight."

The servant girl appeared and Don Illan told her to put them on to roast. With these words, the Pope found himself in the subterranean cell in Toledo, nothing more than dean of Santiago, and so ashamed of his ingratitude that he tried not even to apologize. Don Illan said that this trial was sufficient, denied him his share in the partridges and accompanied him to the street where he wished him a pleasant trip and dismissed him with great courtesy.

SKIES OF INFAMY

by LESTER DEL REY

ROBERT HEINLEIN referred to our times in one of his stories as the year of the jackass. With all due respect, I must disagree. This is obviously the year of Chicken Little, one of the most shamefully misunderstood characters of our literature. In spite of a great outpouring of hot air (in every true and slang meaning of the term), the sky is falling.

In case you don't remember the story, it's worth a careful examination, since the surface version conceals a fine study of the behavior of humanity. In the usual version, Chicken Little was minding his own business one day when something hit him on the head. So he took off on a Paul Revere through the neighborhood,

yelling that the sky was coming down. There being no tranquilizers to soothe them, the other local citizens fell into line—among them being Ducky-Wucky, Henny-Penny, Owly-Howly, and so on. But eventually, they ran across a slicker named Foxey-Loxey, who told them it had been just an acorn that fell. So, without further examination, everyone went home satisfied.

This account is loaded in every possible way to conceal the true moral by making a chump out of the Chick. With every other character concealed under a rhymed pseudonym, his name is uniquely unrhymed, standing as a crude implication that he ran only because he was slightly chicken. More

subtly, he's an egghead, and hence untrustworthy. (Artists even paint him as fuzz-headed and yellow.) The whole job of casting here is odd. All the peaceful barnyard citizens are shown as silly and timid scatterbrains. Only one emerges as a hero, and that is the fox—a traditionally sly, unscrupulous predator. The only way I can explain this switch from the usual wise old owl hero is to assume that the version we have of the tale must have been started by the fox himself.

Who was this fox? Well, by the strictest saucerian logic, we can place him pretty accurately. Just remember that chicks and acorns are not contemporary; by the time acorns are grown, chicks have turned into roosters. Yet Foxey explains everything as being caused by an acorn ridge on the Chick's skull. Why an acorn, except as a concealed symbol for an oak? Aha! And who but an Atomic Energy Commission man would associate the sky falling with Oak Ridge, and then try to conceal the association?

I might almost believe that the whole tale was plotted by the AEC to condition us against taking fallout seriously. Certainly, when people like myself raise a protest, we are promptly told to stop acting like Chicken Little.

Unfortunately, the story as it probably happened is being re-enacted every day, in its real meaning. Someone sees a clear evidence of danger and starts crying out about it, stirring up others to take action. Then the power-predators slyly indicate it's nothing but a trifle. And without ques-

tioning or without even a careful study of the original evidence, the whole subject is supinely dropped. Nobody questions the right of Authority to rule on any question of survival.

I've never understood the official mind, with its assumption that whatever it wants for its own power drives is automatically good and true. But I find it even harder to understand the blind acceptance of such authority on the part of all others. Reading the newspapers clearly proves that anyone with a little power is automatically sure of omniscience and that the mass acceptance of such omniscience is real.

A few years ago, a group who stood to gain publicity from an expose told us some minor officials were guilty of heinous thoughts, and used the testimony of sworn, self-confessed liars to prove the officials were guilty of perjury. Because we were told they were evil men (which they may have been, for all I know by our modern reporting), they were sentenced to jail. A few months ago, a young professor publicly admitted to perjury for reasons of greed and fear. Our publicity-seeking officials became warmly human and told us he was a sweet boy. So we forgave him, brought no trial against him, and admired our charity.

Oh well, maybe consistency is the virtue of small minds and perhaps we merely elect officials to save ourselves the need of too many decisions. Who, except the vague and abstract society-at-large, is hurt? But the same principles seem to apply when there is clear and imminent danger.

The AEC is my shepherd; I shall not live.

It maketh me to lie down in radiant pastures; it leadeth me beside deathly waters. It destroyeth my bones; it leadeth me in the paths of frightfulness, for its name's sake.

Yet, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will hear no evil; for thou art with me; thy bomb and thy SAC, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a fable before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou ancientest thy words with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely, strontium and fallout shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the AEC — but hardly forever.

— Lester del Rey

Recently, there was an accident in the air and a plane crashed. It would have been a routine thing, except that somehow word got out correctly that the plane had been carrying an armed H-bomb which was still lying in the area. The news was hot with this for about three hours. Then the official word came forth. The bomb was quite safe. It could not go off. No danger existed, and brave men of the government were rushing forth to save the area by removing the non-existent danger at once. The newscasters breathed a fervent sigh of relief and buried the story, letting it die away.

No questions were raised. Nobody asked what in hell the bomb was doing over that area in the first place? Nobody wondered about our handling of planes carrying such deadly cargo—cargo which could contaminate an area with dangerous fall-out from Boston to Baltimore in a single blast. The sky fell that time, but Foxey told us it was only an acorn, and we didn't even ask why acorns fell from the clear sky....

I waited patiently for the questioning voices, because this incident tied in with so many other official assurances. When a Nike missile base was established near my home, we were told that there was absolutely no danger—nothing could possibly happen. When it blew up last year, we were assured that it was all a strange accident, but that it could never happen again. When SAC was set up to "protect" us against bombs (by bombing the other country, of course, since nobody can stop an explosion's damage), we were told that there could be no danger to the civilians. The routes flown weren't even over us.

Now, it seems, the skies up there may be filled with planes carrying H-bombs around to "protect" us. Nobody asks how many or why, of course. We're told it's official business. (A democracy must be a country where government—the crass part—is no business of the people—the demos.)

Besides, everyone knows that no plane ever gets in an accident, that no bomb designed carefully to explode can ever explode, that something meant to wipe out millions of the enemy obviously can't hurt even one of us, and that the accident which could never happen can't happen again.

The broader implications here are a trifle more frightening. If this bomb did fall, even harmlessly, on us in spite of the fact it couldn't happen, how about other assurances? We've been told over and over again that SAC is our only defense against missile aggression (even though missiles travel some 15 times as fast as any plane), but that positively and absolutely, no trigger-happy pilot of a plane could decide to go on a private bombing run and start a nuclear war. Maybe we're sending up hundreds of deadly bombs regularly, but it's safe, man, safe! Our pilots are screened, and everyone knows that none could crack up after screening, because Authority implies it. We have precautions for turning off the bombs from the ground, and everyone has been assured that machinery never accidentally malfunctions in SAC. Nor, of course, could any ingenious, traditionally-mechanically-clever man defeat precautions. For that matter, we shouldn't even question what might happen if an American H-Bomb fell on Russia without exploding!

I waited for someone to start investigating the causes and the further possible dangers revealed in the bomb that landed where no bomb could fall. Silence. Authority had told us everything was fine, so we went back to studying the price of tranquilizer stocks. It wasn't that we were numb to danger, either, as proved by other news; it was simply the magic power of Authority to rule.

It works in reverse, of course. Some cranberries from a few sections were found to contain traces of a weed-killing drug which has induced cancer in laboratory animals. Immediately, be-

cause the danger was stated by Authority, everyone was in a hullabaloo. The general danger from eating one dish of perhaps-contaminated berries was minute. But until it was announced that the contaminated berries were off the market, grocers found it difficult to sell even two-year-old cans of cranberry sauce during the peak season.

It doesn't have to be government Authority, of course. If a man has some kind of a degree in any field, his voice is as the thunder of mountains, unless a bigger degree or greater power is brought against him. Recently, the ancient attempt to blame tobacco for something or other has ripened into an established branch of research. Last week, it was announced by these "disinterested" authorities that they had discovered that the tissue of smokers showed evidence that cancer might be formed, and several of my more sane friends tried again to cut down on their smoking. This whole news fascinated me, since I'd like to know why this hitherto-unpublicized but now-alleged ability to detect a danger of cancer in the tissues hasn't been seized on by cancer researchers, and why if it can be done, medicine isn't using it to detect cancer before there is any danger. But nobody asked any questions about that. Instead, more people switched to filters, which are implied to cut down on smoking by-products (though few are actually as effective as the normal unburned tobacco in removing tars and nicotine). It says right on the package that there is less tar—but not whether less than others or less than a tar pit. The Authority of the maker, who surely must know his own product, I suppose.

Don't get me wrong. I think Fleming was absolutely justified in condemning every cranberry until even the most unlikely bit of needless danger could be isolated; I may wonder at his timing, but certainly he was doing only what he should have done.

Nor can I find anything wrong with a study of the toxicity of tobacco smoke, however ridiculous the strange statistics adduced. If cancer is even a remote possibility, then serious steps should be taken to avoid the danger.

But why can't we be consistent? Why do the newspapers play up anything involving the subject when presented by authorities of various kinds, but actually hush news when government authority suggests that there really isn't any danger—even though that danger is recognized by every detached student of the subject? And why do the people here in this democratic bastion meekly submit to the utter tyranny of official information controls, even when there is nothing more than the weight of a press release suggestion to back up such misuse of authority?

Cancer is the villain in both the above scares. Likewise, it is the personal villain (as opposed to racial villain of genetic damage) of the horror that is falling from the sky on us. This horror, of course, would continue to fall for at least ten more years if no bombs were tested and no reactors continued working. But already the "acorns" from the sky are threatening to grow into great oaks among us.

In the highly optimistic *Hearings of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy* of 1957, Dr. E. B. Lewis estimated that one-tenth of the so-called maximum permissible concentration of strontium-90 would cause 55,000 deaths by leukemia in a population like that of the United States.

When the strontium-90 *already in the sky falls* (in from three to ten years) we'll have enough to insure that youngsters by the age of twenty will average from one-twenty-fifth to one-tenth this "maximum"—or, in other words, will be reaching the level where more than 5,000 will die from leukemia. And this is based on the most optimistic estimates I can find which give facts, rather than mere

routine assurances. If a few more tests are made, or if some reactor gets out of control—or most probably, if reactor wastes are not somehow impossibly isolated—people by 1975 may average one-fifth of the so-called "maximum". This wouldn't be enough to bother reporting as a danger, apparently, since it would result in perhaps less than a million deaths from leukemia.

In 1958, in Los Angeles, the sky really fell. One day in October, the radiation level there reached 92% of the optimistic maximum permissible exposure. But that wasn't big news. It was released by the Authorities with the charming reassurance that it was only a sudden event that would clear up. (Nobody explained where all the fallout was to vanish to, to permit that removal of danger.) Citizens who had been aroused by the first news relaxed happily on the reassurance and went back to considering the price of oranges grown on the soil where the fallout occurred.

Wheat grown in Minnesota, vegetables grown in New Jersey, and numerous other food products from across the country have more than once been proved to have more than the so-called safe percentage of radiation from the sky. Milk has been found at times to be far above the levels judged safe. But as one gentleman in the milk business explained to me, "we took care of that news". Everybody should drink more milk for its calcium (which is related to strontium chemically, so that strontium-90 tends to replace calcium in plants and animal tissue). Authorities have told us that nature was wrong, that milk is really the perfect food for adults, and that our teeth need it. Nobody asks about the Eskimos who had no milk but had fine teeth. Instead, the Voice of Authority prevails. So maybe it isn't surprising that nobody finds the danger of cancer to a mere million people alarming when Authority says all will be well. After all, we need to

save our worries for the Authority-condemned tobacco and isolated cranberry offenders, where there might even be as much as a few thousand cancer cases produced!

This reliance on authority isn't new, of course. It was the great characteristic of the Middle Ages. During the happy and enlightened period of unusual democracy and peace under this rule of Medieval authority, however, there were clear ideas of what constituted authority, and those ideas were enforced. An authority then was someone who had gone through the difficult task of setting himself above others through some highly respected institution, usually related to the Church, since all universities then were so related. To the best of the standards of the times, an authority was one who had established his superiority in knowledge and in spiritual understanding. It's a test of authority few could pass today.

When I try to find out what is accepted as authority now, I find the going tougher. Certainly knowledge or proved training in moral and ethical values has little to do with it. It seems to be strictly a matter of Name or Institution Status. If the name is established with respect and envy as of maximum status, or if the speaker professes to represent an Institution whose initials are accepted generally, that man is an Authority. Charles Van Doren became an Authority for television science programs, though he had been a professor of English, by winning a small fortune on a national quiz program. Any press release clerk for NASA becomes more of an Authority on rockets than is the (relatively unknown) designer of the Atlas. Ed Sullivan (whose recent views on the subject I happen to respect, incidentally) is more of an authority on the Russians today after a tour than are the few reporters who have been studying the Russians for years. The *New York Times* was naturally chosen to cover the first atom-

ic explosion test; the man sent by the paper naturally had to receive a prize for his reporting of such an event; and hence, William Laurence is more of an authority on atomics than is any atomic scientist except perhaps Teller.

The rule of Status—whether from personal name or from institution—is the only test I know for authority. And when both the name and the institution confer status on a single individual, there can be no doubt of his qualification. He need have had no experience or education in science, have spent very little time conferring with scientists, not bother to list his advisors, or even bother to read the generally available literature. He becomes front-page Authority.

Governor Nelson Rockefeller obviously has everything to make him such an authoritative spokesman. And naturally, with the terrific potential inherent here, much fuss is made about any word he may give to such a simple thing as our atomic-age destiny.

It began with the suggestion to build bomb-shelters. Every home was to have such a shelter. Now this was a humanitarian and kindly idea, if a trifle difficult and expensive. So a flurry of discussion of this completely eclipsed our discussion of a testing moratorium. Did anyone who could reach the public sit down and figure out what a practical shelter would involve? Or did the public question this? Obviously not. Most people were simply reassured by later dropping of the whole issue. A couple I know who are usually level-headed and who know a fair amount about science are building a shelter.

For my own amusement, I've tried designing a practical shelter. Assuming that it cannot be designed to withstand a close blast—it can't—I've tried to provide for full protection against initial radiation and later fall-out for a reasonable period, until the air is clear enough to breathe and the

ground is safe enough to travel across. It would be impossible in a city, but given a proper site where adequate air intakes could be designed and some underground stream could be set up as a means of making full washing of the air possible, I find that a family of five could increase their chances of survival by about 50% for somewhat more than forty thousand dollars. Anything less is of no more help than simply going down to the basement. (And, of course, it would be necessary that they be in the shelter at the time of the blast.) The proposed scheme as outlined in several papers might actually increase the danger by setting up a ventilation system to increase fall-out concentration within the shelter. On the other hand, if maximum safety is required, I'd be happy to undertake the design of a shelter for up to ten people that would almost guarantee survival beyond the primary target area; the price, given a site outside a crowded city, should not exceed a million dollars by more than 40%.

Interestingly, no insurance company will offer a better deal on life insurance, even with the most elaborate shelter. But I suppose their research lacked the depth that only a true Authority can bring to any old subject at all.

Lately, Mr. Rockefeller has gone on to greater things by suggesting that we must not give up our testing of bombs. In this he has naturally been supported by the man who ordered the first bomb dropping while he was president, and who naturally defends the past policy he helped shape. Currently, we have equally strange hed-fellows in the case of Adlai Stevenson and President Eisenhower, who now both seem to feel more pollution of our tumbling skies must be approached with grave caution. When the Authorities are divided in such a case, what is the Authority-follower to do?

The answer is obvious. We must all

return to our original expert on falling skies, our old fox from the hallowed halls of the AEC. This is still the strong Atlas back which supports the atomic universe to the minds of most of us. (Oh, my aching, aching back!) After all, who but the AEC can know enough about this complicated mess to give a sure answer? They have the full facts—or at least they've made sure no one else can get all of them.

The Atomic Energy Commission has been somewhat silent recently as a result of the current anti-war atmosphere, so far as bomb testing is concerned. But on the level of industrial abuse and reactor air pollution, their stand has not changed, as seen through their actions. The Atomic Energy Commission believes firmly in the Commission of more Atomic Energy, whenever, wherever and however. And in this, they are strongly backed by an unknown but huge number of institutions and suppliers who are dependent on the AEC for funds, supplies of atomic products, and permission to exist, including 99% or more of our colleges and scientists working in the field.

Well, let's examine our greatest Authority. The AEC is the largest completely independent institution in the world. It spends literally billions of dollars of tax money per year, and it controls much more through leasing out its materials and processes. It provides both legislative and executive branches of the government with whatever facts about atomics its directors choose to release, at whatever time-lag it chooses. Its directors are subject to neither the control of Congress nor of the President, except in extremely weak and indirect ways. It is responsible for most of our military atomic development, but is not part of or directly subject to any military authority. Yet it can override any attempt at legislative control through appropriations by a show of necessity for defense, in which the

military services must back it; no Congressman can bold out against this without more information than the AEC need furnish him to use against it!

It has power undreamed of by any president. It and it alone decides who shall work in atomics. There is no real appeal. Any applicant for work in this field must receive a clearance, no matter how brilliant his studies, which involves anything about him the AEC chooses to consider. The nuclear programs in schools are mostly run under AEC grants and supplied with both knowledge and radioactives by the AEC. Congress, when attempting to legislate on atomics, must work with material screened for them through the AEC, and with "independent" scientists as advisors who are first okayed by the Commission and subject to review by any whim or fancy if they step out of line.

The AEC put on one of the most elaborate and costly propaganda campaigns possible in its "Atoms for Peace" roadshow. It furnishes exhibits and lecturers for the schools, down to the elementary level. Its advertising budget—from tax dollars—would equal that of any commercial enterprise.

It has the power to declare almost anything so secret that no hint of it will appear. Research which does not fit the direction chosen by the AEC can be stopped by a mere use of the rubber stamp. Dr. Oppenheimer, for instance, could not even secure permission to read some of the papers he wrote!

And who runs the Commission? Well, in theory, five members appointed by the President and approved by the Senate. (Their suitability for the job from now on will naturally be decided on the basis of AEC advice.) In practice, there have been many accusations that the single chairman of the Commission can override the others.

But what qualifications must these

men have? Generally, they must have the qualifications of being available and of being acceptable for some reason or other to the President. The background of Admiral Strauss, who did much to firm up the power of the AEC, was that of naval administration. When appointed, he probably had heard that reactors produced some kind of waste, but he needn't have known even that much. On the other hand, Dr. Teller is a trained scientist, but his chief work at times seems to be political. When the London Conference headed toward a disarmament plan, it was Dr. Teller who stepped in and made our national policy while defeating the disarmament plans. His plea was that we needed time to make the bombs clean—less deadly. (Nobody seemed to wonder if a plan to prevent the use of bombs might not void the need to make them less deadly.) Needless to say, Dr. Teller has no background in either foreign policy or national political responsibility, outside of the AEC.

There is also a Committee on Reactor Safety—the body which should in theory protect us all. That group of fifteen men is chosen by the Commission itself.

Even the purpose of the AEC is a strange one. It is primarily responsible for contributing to the maximum defense and security (against outside threats, not necessarily against internal abuse). Only after this is it to promote world peace, improve general welfare, raise the living standard, and strengthen competitive free enterprise. How? As it decides.

So far, it has failed abysmally in every one of these objectives, if we are to judge by the verdict of the very Authorities who are its strongest spokesmen. According to such men as William Laurence, the Russians only got the hydrogen bomb as a result of spying out our secrets, not from spying on nature. In 1946, when the AEC was set up, we had no H-bomb, so the leak must have been after that. In

any event, the restrictive policies of the AEC in terms of security regulations may have been necessary, but the result seems to have been to put Russia ahead of us with weapons which we are totally incapable of defending ourselves against. The latest word is that Russia has a larger stockpile of H-weapons than we have—and has a stock of missiles capable of delivering them in ways we cannot either detect or prevent in time.

World peace? Dr. Teller was the one to prevent our leading the world toward disarmament, and we left it finally up to Khrushchev to take that ball from our hands as both a peaceful and propaganda medium. General welfare? The AEC consistently and constantly has been the last to admit any danger from radiation, and has been wrong so far in every estimate they have made. Furthermore, they have contributed very little—most applications of atomics to general welfare have come from work begun prior to their existence. Standard of living? At the present time, not one reactor is capable of turning out power at a rate that can compete with other forms of energy, after 13 bitter years of promises. Private enterprise? Only by the most elaborate system of subsidies, guarantees and government insurance has the government persuaded any private enterprise to show any interest in atomic power plants.

And how about knowledge, the extraordinary source of all riches?

That is more pie in the sky, it seems. It was England and Russia who developed the first and most advanced power plants, not we. And if the releases of the Commission are to be taken as the sum of their knowledge, then we are the last country in the world to discover anything. Russia leads in fusion-power research.

After most other countries were publishing the facts, we learned only by accident that bomb tests could be detected by earth shocks for 6000 miles. (This could have led to meth-

ods of strengthening our security, but the information was not available to our armed forces.) Most other countries were publishing accurate estimates for fallout rate long before we got any of the facts. It wasn't until after the facts became too strongly established to deny that the AEC finally admitted that more fallout had occurred in one year than it had estimated for ten, and that our entire theory of fallout was wrong.

The study of concentration of radioactives from fallout into the bones of children, and of ultra-dangerous hotspots, came from work done in England and Sweden (which doesn't even have a bomb). The AEC first denied and then grudgingly admitted some of the validity. Later it was forced once more to revise its "maximum" safe levels downward. While every other civilized country was alarmed about the danger of strontium-90, we were talking about "sunshine units" and the fact that absolutely no harm could be caused us. We were the last country in the world to admit that there was no really harmless level of radiation, and the admission was forced by Congressional studies, and then minimized. The AEC was talking about safe levels when every other body studying the matter had dropped such nonsense.

And when the *Lucky Dragon* crew was caught in fallout (where our theories showed it should be so mild as not to matter), we had a wonderful chance to make a study of the effects of fallout. What did the AEC do? They kept the story pretty well buried for a year, and they made no effort to rush experts to Japan, either to study or to alleviate the suffering of the crew. The doctors treating the men couldn't even get information on what they were dealing with or the nature of the dangers!

From the response of the AEC to that and to other dangers that have cropped up, it would seem that in promoting our security and common wel-

fare, the AEC hasn't even made a thorough study of the detection and treatment of fallout victims! This may not be true, but if so the information has not been made available in any meaningful form to doctors, so it is effectively nonexistent.

Partly as a result of Congressional and private pressure, there has now been established a public safety study on radiation under the Department of Health, Welfare and Education. It's too early to tell whether they can huck the AEC—but I would like to dream of a highly unlikely success for them. So far, though, they haven't developed any Authority for public following.

Our skies are filled with death. There are an estimated ten to twenty years to elapse before all the strontium-90 falls from our air and the maximum is reached, even if no further fusion or fissions occurs; this represents a vast horror to come. Meantime every reactor spouts out death. (This is particularly true of the reactors that are air-cooled through huge stacks, but applies to all in a large degree.) Krypton-85 is a gas, and it is also an inert element, which cannot be compounded into non-gaseous forms. It is steadily leaking out from every atomic reactor. At the present rate, by the year 2000 it seems that the concentration of this deadly, indisposable gas in the air will have reached approximately the so-called maximum permissible concentration. After that, of course, all life is doomed.

Nero fiddled while Rome burned, and Nero has been held in infamy ever since, whether the story was true or not. Even if true, his forced slum clearance may have saved more from pestilence than it harmed. But I wonder whether even Nero would have felt himself ready to fiddle while the skies were filled with the rising hot winds of universal death, and while no need for such a holocaust could be proved?

Or would the populace, even when only warned by a few shouting voices, have permitted such a doom? And such infamy?

Here and there today, the voices are being raised. Scientists and reporters of new findings don't make the headlines, but the accounts of the facts are slowly accumulating to show that the sky is raining death on us. Chicken Little is crying out again. And down in Washington, the fox is

smiling in his AEC lair and muttering little cheerful words about a bumper crop of acorns.

Personally, I'm hardly an Authority and the weight of Authority is all against the facts I find. But I don't see even one oak tree within miles and miles, so I have a suspicion that the sky really is falling.

Judge for yourself—and for all future generations.

ISRAEL'S LUNAR PROBE

"Israel Does It"—"Egghead on Target"—"Cohen's first on Moon!" screamed the world's headlines hard on the heels of the Soviet success. The scientific bigwigs and newspaper doyens had hardly finished explaining the last cosmic probe when, on a clear dry day, Israel dispatched its mighty ambassador to outer space, leaving behind it a world staggered by the audacity of a small country, and puzzled as to how it had the millions for such a project.

The answer to this apparent riddle only turned the Powers' bewilderment into sheepishness. For the cost of the Israel lunar rocket was merely the price of an Egged diesel bus. This highly improbable but true fact became public knowledge almost immediately, despite the blackout imposed by official quarters.

What was the secret of this extraordinary missile, a common silver bus grimy-pained Egged diesel bus? The exhaust supplied the thrust which sent the machine hurtling moonwards.

At first, reports circulated that the bus, up-ended on its rear, had been launched from a pad in Tel Aviv's central bus station. This early account by alleged eyewitnesses was subsequently proved incorrect although newspaper reporters, hard-pressed to explain the mysterious event, had meantime furnished full imaginary details, such as, for example, that the bus was manned by two persons, a driver and someone with whom he could chat while travelling.

With the rocket-bus making a bee-line for the moon, this account would have remained undisputed; Egged maintained an ominous silence, neither denying nor

affirming this early report except to confirm that the bus indeed belonged to Egged. But the next day the truth emerged.

A diesel bus was merrily plying the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway, lithely negotiating the hills, when suddenly, rising rapidly out of a steep switchback with exhaust roaring, it simply took off, up into the blue sky.

Indeed, after the news broke, a gang of J.N.F. forestry workers in the Jerusalem Corridor remembered that they had seen a strange silvery cigar-like object in the sky, leaving behind a dark nimbus cloud. A number of land-parched farmers in nearby settlements were even led to believe that at last rain was about to fall.

An official statement from its headquarters in Tel Aviv, the company proclaimed. This is an historic day in the annals of the company and indeed of the nation as a whole. The public can rest assured that we, who have pioneered transport from Dan to Eilat, will not disappoint in this epoch-making journey. We have the utmost confidence that our driver, a full share-holder member, will live up to the company's motto of "Where there's a wheel, there's a way."

Will the bus reach the moon, and if so, will it land? As the gleaming bus thunders on its relentless way through outer space, losing momentum but still with apparently enough thrust to gain the objective, the company has been besieged by scientific delegations seeking what has become known as "the Secret of the Exhaust."

SHALOM COHEN

the perverse erse

by ADRIEN COBLENTZ

THE EVENING crowd had thinned at Moriarty's in South Bend, and only the regulars were left, a small group at one end of the dark oak bar, chatting quietly. At that moment a short gaunt man entered, and in a very thick brogue ordered a glass of Tullamore Dew. Finishing his drink he sighed deeply and put a thick manila envelope on the bar. He sighed again and at this Phineas O'Rourke put down his beer and remarked, "Sure now, that's the most mournful sound I've heard since the day me grandfather fell down the stairs with a case of the real Irish in his arms; twelve bottles broken, it were."

The stranger turned toward Phineas, and his face had the haunted look of a man who has looked upon some incredible catastrophe testing the very limits of man's sanity and barely survived. Again he sighed, then lifted the envelope with his left hand and waved it vaguely in

Phineas' direction. His voice broke as he spoke. "I had to, I really had to. After all, as head of the department of research anthropology at the university, I'm duty-bound to report this. But they wouldn't accept it; in fact, they—politely, of course—suggested I take a sabbatical until I got over it. I understand their position, and perhaps releasing this information would have a terrible effect on Erin, but in the name of truth and science, it should be known."

At the mention of possible harm to the Emerald Isle, the whole group perked up their ears, and John Gaffney politely asked, "Is it something you could be telling us about? Sure and it's interested we'd be if it has to do with Ireland." The rest of them nodded and added a chorus of ayes.

The sad-looking man sighed again, looked at his empty glass and, nodding to the bartender, to refill it, began opening the manila envelope.

"I suppose I ought to introduce

myself first. I'm Paul Corscadden, assistant professor of anthropology. Though born in the old country, I was raised here in the midwest—caught between two cultures, as it were."

At this point, the bartender, caught up in the unfolding of this tragic story, commented, "But your brogue..."

"Yes, of course," interrupted the professor, "it returned during my field trip to county Mayo three months ago. But that's getting ahead of the story. Here..." Reaching into the envelope, he took out a manuscript, "let me just read the article to you."

The bartender refilled all glasses as the group settled back, lighting pipes, to listen in intense curiosity tinged with dread somehow conveyed by the utter misery in Professor Corscadden's voice.

AN EXPLANATION FOR THE LUPRACAN PHENOMENON AS DISCOVERED IN AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CULTURE OF EIRE.

"Long considered to be wholly mythical, the little Irish elf, commonly known as the Leprechaun, has an enormous amount of folklore associated with it. Such tales as..." Here the professor interrupted and said, "This is unnecessary; I'm sure you all know the background to this field study; let me get to the crux of the matter." And turning to the last pages in the manuscript, he began again.

"Perhaps the most universally known legend associated with Luracan is that associated with the pot of gold each of the elves is supposed to possess. It has been rather universally observed among the natives of this island, that if one captures one of these sprites, it will beg desperately to be released. If the captor does not do so, it will next resort to all sorts of trickery and magic.

Failing this, the tightfisted individual who maintains his grasp on the little man will then be offered a pot of gold, ostensibly the life savings of this immortal creature. It is invariably at this point that, conditions being what they are in Ireland, the fortunate individual who has contrived to trap a lugharcán (anthropologists always delight in technical terms) interpolated professor Corscadden, using the interruption to sip from his refilled glass and seeming to relax a bit as the power of the golden brew began to take effect) "agrees to the bargain. There are no known records of what might happen or what the next efforts of the leprechaun might be were his captor to still refuse. Indeed there is something a bit ominous in the absence of such information. This background material should be borne in mind as I describe an experience I had while doing research in a hamlet deep in the heart of the area under investigation.

On leaving the pub—a logical place for interviewing the local townsfolk—I took what I thought to be a short cut to my quarters, through a small wooded area. It was pleasantly shaded and dim. Suddenly, in the shadows there was a movement and just as it caught my eye, whatever had moved froze into immobility. As I walked towards it to investigate, the creature flushed and ran. With some difficulty I pursued it, suddenly realizing it was a little old man! It was with the greatest of difficulty that I was able to maintain my cool, scientific detachment as I realized that I was close to the possibility of realizing the researcher's dream, the objectification of certain data previously thought to be spurious. Just at the edge of the wood, the figure stumbled and I was able to get a firm grasp on its arm. It spoke in a pathetic voice, pleading to be released (first in Gaelic), then, recognizing my weakness in that

tongue, in English), and it would have had to be a cruel man indeed (or one who knew of the pot of gold) to have resisted such a piteous request. Notwithstanding, I firmly drew him toward the meadow, intent on getting a clear picture of this amazing discovery. The creature's pleadings grew most intense at this point, and for a moment, he seemed to change into some sort of snake-like creature (an obvious impossibility in Ireland), but before it was able to do anything else, I had brought it out into broad sunlight. The explanation for his terrible need to be released into the shadows and not be publicly viewed became horrendously clear. So shocking was my realization of this phenomenon that my hands became paralyzed, and I could not hold my captive. With a cry of gratified relief, it fled to the shadows of the woods while I sank to the grass in stupefaction.

It has been only after full consideration of the tremendous impact that release of this information will

have on the peoples of this fascinating culture, of the devastating effect it will have on their sympathizers in this country and others where their descendants have gone, that I decided that in the interests of science and true knowledge the facts must be known. It is therefore with terribly mixed emotions and deepest sympathy for those who must be hurt that I make this information public: The leprechaun, for such it must have been, was, from head to toe, including his hair, a brilliant shade of orange!"

A pall of silence hung over the room when Professor Corscadden had finished speaking. With bowed head, the tragic figure slowly replaced the document into the folder, then wiped at the tears on his cheek. The group, themselves moist-eyed, looked sympathetically at the professor, then quickly averted their eyes to avoid staring at the unsightly blotch on his right hand, an orange blotch with an uncanny resemblance to a shamrock.

NEXT MONTH-

IMPORTANT FICTION by ZENNA HENDERSON,

A. BERTRAM CHANDLER and ROBERT SILVERBERG

A STARTLING NEW ARTICLE ABOUT

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN by IVAN T. SANDERSON

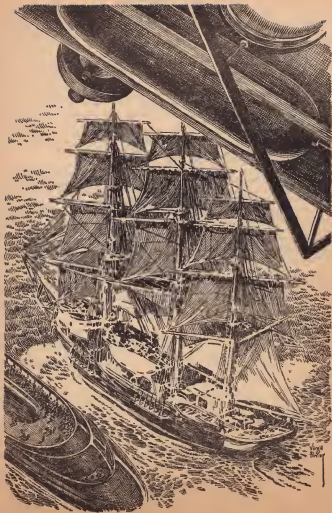
and

THE SECOND INSTALMENT OF

FREDRIC BROWN'S EXCITING NEW NOVEL—

THE MIND THING

—in your FANTASTIC UNIVERSE



by GEORGE O. SMITH

TIME FOR SURVIVAL

THE STORM ruined my plan.

Not by seasickness. I'd come prepared for the worst, knowing how rough it could get on a sailing ship of the Nineteenth Century. I outrode the storm easily, stowed away in the hold. Not even the breakage of some of the 1700 barrels of alcohol carried as a cargo bothered me although the stench was terrific.

But on the morning of 25 November 1872, the first mate, Albert Richardson sent the second mate, Andrew Gilling below with two of the German seamen to assay the storm damage. They found me and I was hauled aloft before Captain Briggs as a stow-away.

Captain Briggs of the *Mary Celeste* eyed my strange clothing with deep curiosity, but his interest was obviously more concerned with my unauthorized presence. He said sternly, "When did you get aboard?"

I realized that I had to impress him. I smiled. "You delayed your sailing from the Fifth November to the

Sixth so that you and Mrs. Briggs could have dinner aboard *Die Gratia* with Captain Morehouse," I said.

"How can you know so much?" he exclaimed. "How can you live as a stowaway for almost twenty days?"

I held up my chronithon contactor, knowing that now I could impress him indeed. "Captain Briggs," I said. "I am a time-travelling historian from the Twenty-Second Century." I pointed to the big red button on the top. "Until I depress this button and return to my own day and age, every morning I receive my daily ration of food and water. It's about—"

I'd timed it close. I was interrupted by the click of the chronithon as it time-transferred my daily ration. I opened the cabinet and offered a bite of twenty-second century breakfast to the captain.

He said, "This is a sailor's tall tale, I think. You claim that you're a time-travelling historian? Then tell me, why are you here on *Mary Celeste*?"

"Captain Briggs," I said, "the Time

Machine was invented in Nineteen Eighty-Seven. Within twenty years every historical event had been painstakingly researched and authentically written—re-written—by time-traveling historians who viewed the event as partaking eye-witnesses. By my time, fame and fortune awaits any man who has the luck and dogged determination to scour historic time to locate some event that has not been recounted faithfully to the last niggling little detail. Why, Captain Briggs, in Jim Bishop's famous 'The Day Columbus Landed' they record the name of the man who owned the hen that laid the egg that Columbus stood on end to impress Isabella with his ability. And so, Captain Briggs, I stowed away because I—"

A woman's voice interrupted me, I turned to look at the captain's wife who, of course, was the only woman aboard *Mary Celeste*. She was carrying little Sophia Matilda in her arms. She said, "Edward, what unearthly manner of ship is that?"

The steward, Edward Head replied, "I don't rightly know, ma-am."

I turned to look. No more than fifty feet from the starboard rail was a vast barge. Upon the barge were serried rows of seats that stretched upwards and backwards for hundreds of feet. The seats were filling rapidly; ushers were escorting the spectators efficiently, vendors were selling refreshments and programs. A thrumming sound came from overhead and I looked up to watch the materialization of jetcopters and personnel carriers and even a poised spacecraft hanging in a dome above our heads.

Over the lee rail came a crew of technicians carrying the heavy Ward-Workman tridli recorders of the twenty-seventh century, and their director pulled a script from his pocket and said:

"Joe, you and Pete dislocate the binnacle and break the compass. Al, open the fore hatch and lazarette. Tony, that spring-wound chronom-

eter is a pre-atomic clock and worth a fortune to the National Museum, put it among my personal loot, along with the sextant. You can keep the ship's register, but give the navigation books to George with my compliments. Let's see, um. Sails, jib and fore-topmast. Now toss the yawl overboard; get it out of the way. It's missing." One of his men came up and said something to him that I could not hear. "No," he replied, "It would not be more dramatic to dummy-up a half-eaten breakfast and a pan of milk warming on the stove for the baby. Too many writers tried to make it that way in the beginning. I know what's authentic."

Then he paused as the Ward-Workman cameramen panned around *Mary Celeste* making close-up and approach shots. One by one they finished their work and reported to him.

"Fine," he said, looking at his strapwatch. "Now let's back off for some long shots. And remember, we don't know what kind of a catastrophe this is going to be, so keep those tridli recorders running constantly until I tell you to stop!"

Captain Benjamin Spooner Briggs of *Mary Celeste* put an arm around his wife. To me he said, "I don't completely understand, but I do get enough to realize that we're the subject of something evil."

"Yes," I replied, "you—"

"We're not waiting here to let it happen to us!" he snapped.

"But you can't change history!" I objected.

"Watch," he said roughly. And then with a stentorian voice, Captain Briggs roared: "*Abandon ship!*"

The captain and his wife, still carrying their daughter Sophia Matilda, mingled with the photorecording crew. The two mates, the steward, and the four German seamen went over the side and swam swiftly for the barges. There were flurries of activity when they went aboard the

barges, but then the activity stilled and I was alone on *Mary Celeste*.

I looked around me and realized that Captain Briggs hadn't changed history. He'd made it!

Slowly the barges emptied, the spectators returned to their own time and place among the Centuries. Sorrowfully I pressed my button and went home. My fame would never be, my fortune would never start. My book would remain unwritten, for I knew full well that potential customer for this historic event had been here as an eye witness. After seeing it, who'd bother to buy my book?

On 4 December, 1872, Captain Morehouse of *Die Gratia* sighted *Mary Celeste* yawing in a mild sea with jib and fore-topmast sails set, no one at the helm and no one aboard. The binnacle was knocked out of place, the compass was broken. The sextant, the chronometer, ship's register and navigation books were missing. The ship's yawl, lashed to the

main hatch was missing. The fore hatch and lazarette were open and about a dozen of the ship's cargo of 1701 barrels of alcohol were broken or leaking badly.

The last notation in the ship's deck log had been made early in the morning of 25 November 1872, and the account of the previous hours indicated that *Mary Celeste* had come through a severe storm on the previous day and most of the night.

Accounts that include half-eaten plates of food, half-packed bags and other evidences of an abrupt interruption and panicky flight for safety are false.

No survivors have ever turned up, no explanation can be given. Researchers in the "Mystery of *Mary Celeste*" suggest that the storm, the leaking alcohol, combined to frighten Captain Briggs with a threat of fire or explosion and that they all took off in the ship's yawl, which floundered.

We will not know the truth until someone invents the Time Machine.

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THE MIND THING

by FREDRIC BROWN

CHAPTER ONE

THE MIND THING used his perceptor sense to test this strange and alien environment in which he found himself. He had no organs of vision or hearing but his perceptor sense was something far better; he could 'see' all around himself, very clearly for about twenty yards, tapering to dim vision for another twenty or so, but his seeing was unimpeded by intervening objects. He could see the bark on the far side of a tree as plainly as that on the near side. He could see down into the ground as far and as clearly as in any other direction. His ability to sense vibrations extended even farther and was extremely acute within its range.

He could not only see but 'hear' worms burrowing in the ground under him; they were puzzling, for no such life form existed in any other world he knew of. But they seemed to offer no danger. Nor did a few small birds in the trees overhead. They were almost familiar; bird life tends to evolve along quite similar lines on all warm planets that have atmospheres dense enough to permit natural flight. (But what monstrous trees they

perched in; they were several times as large as any he had ever known.) And there was a strange four-legged animal sleeping in a burrow, a tunnel in the ground which it seemed to have made for itself, only about ten yards away.

Since the four-legged one was sleeping, the mind thing knew that he could enter into its mind, make it his host. But there seemed nothing to gain. Where there were small creatures there were almost certainly larger ones, with more strength and brain capacity. Possibly even...

Yes! His second scanning of his surroundings showed him something he had not noticed on the first one. Lying in the grass a dozen yards away was a rusted broken-bladed jackknife that had been thrown away or lost there. He didn't recognize it for a jackknife, but whatever it was it was plainly an artifact. And an artifact meant intelligent life!

It meant danger, too. Intelligent life could be inimical, and he was small and vulnerable. He had to know more about the intelligent life form, preferably by catching its first specimen when it was sleeping so he could enter its mind. He could learn more

that way than by any amount of observation.

He was in an exposed position right beside what seemed to be a path. He had to get himself at least as far as the tall grass a yard away where he would be out of sight. Such concealment would be useless, of course, against his own kind or any other race that had perception instead of sight. But the chances were thousands to one that the intelligent creatures here, whatever they might be like otherwise, had only sight. He knew that on none of the thousands of known planets had both vision and the sense of perception developed side by side. One or the other, only. And here the birds and the small four-legged animal all had eyes.

He tried to levitate himself to move that yard, and found that he could not. He was not surprised. He had already suspected from several indications that this, compared to his own world, was a heavy gravity planet. And his species, even on their own planet, had almost lost the power of levitation. Levitation was a strain and since they all had hosts it was so much easier to have their hosts move them, when moving was necessary, than to levitate. An unused power diminishes as surely as an unused muscle atrophies.

So he was helpless, until and unless he could find a host strong enough to move him. And the only creature *sleeping* nearby, the only one he could take over and make a host, was definitely too small, probably weighed about half what he did. Of course he could reduce his weight somewhat by *trying* to levitate while the four-legged—

At extreme range he perceived something, and suddenly concentrated all his attention in that direction. If danger was coming there wasn't time now to experiment with using the small animal to move him into concealment.

At first it was only vibration, vi-

bration that could have been footsteps, footsteps of something relatively large. And another type of vibration that came through the air and not through the ground, that was like the sounds certain types of creatures, usually intelligent ones, who communicated vocally, used for that purpose. There seemed to be two voices, one higher in the vibration range than the other, talking alternately. Of course the words meant nothing to the mind thing, nor could he probe their thoughts; his species could communicate telepathically but only among themselves.

Then they came within range of visual perception. There were two of them. One was slightly larger than the other, but they were both big. Obviously they were members of the intelligent race, or an intelligent race, for they both wore clothing—and only intelligent races wear clothing, during a certain period of their development. They stood erect, and had two legs and two arms apiece. With hands—and that would make them excellent hosts, but there was no time to think of that now. His problem was survival, until he could catch such a creature sleeping.

They were of a two-sexed species, he saw—for he perceived their clothing but his perception was not limited thereby; he could have studied their internal organs as readily as their nude bodies—and they were one of each sex. They were mammalian.

But the important thing was that they were coming closer, they were walking along the path and they would pass within one or two feet of him; they could hardly miss seeing him.

Out of desperation he grabbed at the mind of the only host available, the small four-legged one. He took no time to probe or study it; he started it scurrying madly out of its burrow. He'd have it intercept the two aliens. What would happen then he didn't know, but he had nothing to lose. He

was less helpless with a small, weak host than with none at all. Perhaps, although it was unlikely, the tiny life form might be dangerous to the large strong life forms. Perhaps it was venomous or equivalently deadly in some other way. All over the galaxy there were planets on which some small life form was able, in one way or another, to terrorize larger creatures. It was at least equally possible that the two-legged creatures would look upon the little four-legged one as food and try to catch it to eat. In that case, he hoped the little creature could run as fast as they; if it could, he could have it lead them off the path for a while until they were safely past him. Then they could safely catch it and kill it.

It would have to be killed, or kill itself, in any case. Just as the only way he could enter a host was while it slept, the only way he could leave one was at the moment of its death. And this host was too frail and tiny a thing for him to want to use any longer than he had to stay in it.

Charlotte Garner stopped walking suddenly and because she had her right arm linked with Tommy Hoffman's left he stopped too, so unexpectedly in his case that he almost went off balance for a second. He looked at Charlotte and saw that she was looking down at the path in front of them.

"Look, Tommy," she said. "A field mouse. And look what it's doing!"

Tommy looked. "I'll be darned," he said.

The field mouse, right in the middle of the path and not much over a foot away from them, was sitting up like a prairie dog. But quite unlike a prairie dog, it was waving its little front feet frantically, as though trying to signal to them. And its sharp little eyes looked directly up into theirs.

"I never saw one act like that," Charlotte said. "It acts like it's friendly, not afraid. Maybe someone

made a pet out of it, and then it got away—but still likes people."

"Could be, I guess. I never saw one act like that either. Okay, Mousie, move along so we don't have to step over you."

"Wait a minute," Charlotte said. She'd already disentangled her arm from his. "It's so tame I bet I can pick it up."

Even before she'd finished saying that, Charlotte bent down and swept out a hand, grabbed the field mouse gently but tightly. Charlotte was a very quick-moving girl, with fast reflexes. She had the field mouse before Tommy could protest (if he would have) or before the mouse could turn and run (if it would have).

"Oh, Tommy, he's cute."

"Okay, he's cute. But you're not going to take him along, are you, Charl? You can't hold him while we—"

"I'll put him down in a sec, Tommy. I just wanted to see if I could pick him up. And pet him a little. Ouch!" She dropped the field mouse. "Little devil bit me."

The field mouse scurried away from them and off one side of the path and then, only about six feet away, stopped and looked back to see if they were chasing it. They weren't; they weren't even looking at it, and they hadn't moved.

"Hurt you, honey?" Tommy asked.

"No, just a little nip. Startled me, that's all." She happened to look down again. "Tommy! Look!"

The field mouse was running back, this time toward Tommy. It started to run up the leg of his trousers. He knocked it off with a hand, sent it rolling four or five feet. And it came back to attack again—if attack was its intention. But this time Tommy had kept his eyes on it, and was ready. His foot lifted and came down; there was a faint crunching sound. With the side of his shoe he kicked what was left of the field mouse off the path.

"Tommy! Did you have to—?"

His face was dark as he turned to

her. "Charl, that thing was crazy, attacking me twice. Listen, if it drew blood when it bit you we've got to get back to town fast. And take—it with us, so they can check to see if it was rabid. Where'd it bite you, Charl?"

"On the b-breast, the left breast, when I held it close against me. But I don't think it drew blood—not through this sweater and a bra. It was more a pinch than a bite. It didn't hurt much, just scared me into letting go of it."

"We'll have to check. Take off your— No, we're almost there. One minute won't matter, and somebody might come along here."

He took her arm this time and strode ahead so fast that she almost had to run to keep up with him.

"Look, a turtle," she said, a dozen steps on.

He didn't slow down. "Haven't you played with enough animals this afternoon? Hurry, honey."

Another dozen paces and they turned off the path, went around behind trees and bushes to the spot that they had discovered together and had made peculiarly theirs. It was a soft-grassy spot screened from all directions by bushes, a perfect hideaway just far enough from the path so they couldn't even be heard there if they talked in normal tones of voice. It had all the privacy of a desert island and none of the latter's disadvantages. It was as sylvanly beautiful as it was secluded. And easily accessible, for young and healthy people to whom a two-mile walk each way was a pleasure and not a tiring chore.

They were young and healthy, and deeply in love. Tommy Hoffman was seventeen and Charlotte Garner was sixteen. They had played together as children. They still went to school together and were now in the same grade for Tommy, who didn't care much for schooling, had flunked a grade once, putting him back to Charlotte's level. They were now both sophomores in high school.

They had fallen in love a year ago and six months ago had decided to get married. They'd talked to their families about it and had met no opposition except on the subject of when the marriage might take place. Tommy, who had just passed his seventeenth birthday, wanted them to quit school right away and get married. There would be no difficulties, he pointed out. Tommy's father was a widower and Tommy an only child; they lived in a quite large farmhouse (Mr. Hoffman had been thinking ahead to a large family when he had built it) so there'd be not only room for Charlotte but for their children, if and when they had any. And Tommy, who knew a lot about farming already and wanted to be a farmer in any case, could help his father full time instead of part time; Charlotte would take over the house and between them they'd more than earn their keep. And that was the arrangement that would no doubt be made two years from now if they finished high school first, so why wait? And what did a farmer want with a high school diploma? Mr. Hoffman himself, Tommy pointed out, had had only a grade school education, and had done all right for himself. Besides, neither he nor Charlotte wanted to finish high school. They didn't hate school, exactly, but they didn't think they were getting anything out of it either. What good would history or algebra do a farmer or a farmer's wife?

As usual in such discussions, when they are amicable on all sides, a compromise was reached. They didn't have to finish high school and lose two years. If they waited one year, continuing school meanwhile, until Tommy was eighteen and Charlotte seventeen, Tommy's father and Charlotte's parents would give them consent to quit school and get married.

That had been six months ago and now they had only another six months to wait. In another sense they had quit waiting a month ago. They had

held out (or Charlotte had) until the day a month ago when, walking through the woods, they had found this tiny, secluded paradise. And that day the weather had been too perfect, the place too beautiful, the kisses too wonderful, and the petting too passionate; biology had taken over. There had been no tears or regrets; for a first experience (for both of them) it had been unusually wonderful. Of course, having no standard of comparison, they didn't know it was unusually wonderful; just that it was very wonderful indeed. Nor had they any regrets, then or since, on moral grounds. They had been brought up to believe that sex outside of marriage was wrong, but *this* wasn't wrong. They were going to be married anyway, weren't they, as soon as they could? And meanwhile they could consider themselves already married in the eyes of God—and if there is a God who cares about such things, no doubt he did so consider them. They were very much in love.

This was the third time they'd been back here since. But this one didn't start like the others, because of the field mouse.

"Quick, Charl," Tommy said urgently. "Peel off that sweater. And if there's the slightest break in your skin where that—that thing bit you, we'll have to get back, *run* back. Does it hurt at all?"

"Just enough so I can tell where it was." She lowered her hand and smiled at him. "You might kiss it and make it well. If you need an excuse."

Tommy didn't need an excuse. And they both knew that what was going to happen would be at least as wonderful as the other times, and maybe a little more so because of reaction from the scare they'd had.

And wonderful it was but this time, although they didn't know it, something was different.

This time something watched them, something whose equivalent of vision was not blocked by intervening trees

and bushes. Something more horrible (although dispassionately so) than anything either of them had ever conceived in nightmare.

CHAPTER TWO

The mind thing watched avidly. Not because of prurience; he would not have understood the meaning of the word. He had no sex himself; the pronoun *he* is being used only because *it* becomes very awkward when repeatedly used as a personal pronoun. His species reproduced by fission, by one creature dividing itself and becoming two, as do only lower life forms, such as bacteria, on Earth.

But he watched as eagerly as though his interest were prurient, because of a sudden hope, once he saw and understood what they were doing. Now he felt hopeful of acquiring a suitable host, and soon. He knew, from his knowledge (some first hand, some acquired), of a thousand worlds which held creatures which, like these, were of two sexes and performed the sex act in at least a somewhat similar manner, had a strong tendency to sleep after performing their sex act. Not because it physically exhausted them, but because the intelligent species so sexed found themselves emotionally exhausted, and contentedly replete.

If either of them slept, he had a host. If they both slept, he decided, he would choose the male since he was definitely the larger and stronger of the two. Quite probably the more intelligent as well.

After a while they relaxed and were motionless for a moment and he began to hope. Then they moved again, kissed a few times, murmured a few things. But then, relaxing in a somewhat different position, they were quiet again.

The female slept first, and he could have entered her, but the male had his eyes closed and his breathing was slow and regular; obviously he was on

the verge of sleep, so the mind thing waited.

Then the male slept, and the mind thing entered its mind. There was a brief but terrible struggle as the ego, the essence, the part of the mind that was Tommy Hoffman, fought back. There was always such a struggle in taking over an intelligent creature. (It was negligible in the case of an animal; it had taken him only a micro-second to enter the small four-legged one less than an hour ago.) But the more intelligent the species the harder the struggle was; it varied too with the degree of intelligence of the individual within the species.

In this case it took him about a second, average for a moderately intelligent creature. Then he had Tommy Hoffman's mind and through it control of Tommy's body. The whatever-you-want-to-call-it that was Tommy Hoffman was still there, but locked up and helpless, unable to use its own body or its own senses. The mind thing *had* it, and it could obtain release now only through death. Tommy's death, or the mind thing's.

The mind thing now had all of Tommy's memories and all, such as it was, of his knowledge. But he was going to take time to assimilate all of that, make sense of it and make his plans from it. First things came first.

And the first thing was to get himself—his own body, into a safe place of concealment. Before some other man or men (he had Tommy's vocabulary now to think with) might come along and harm or destroy it.

He let everything else go and searched Tommy's thoughts and memories for a good hiding place, and found one. Half a mile deeper in the woods was a cave in a hillside. A small cave, but a secret one. Tommy had found it years ago, when he was a boy of nine, and had thought of it as *his* cave and had never shown it to anyone else; to his knowledge no one else knew of its existence. Besides, it had a sandy floor.

Very quietly so as not to awaken the girl (he could have strangled her, of course, but that would be an unnecessary complication; he had no empathy for lesser creatures but neither did he kill wantonly) he got up and started for the path. Since time might be important—someone else might come along that path at any time—he didn't have his host dress. Tommy wore only a pair of blue socks; his other garments—shoes, shorts, trousers and a shirt—lay in a pile beside where he had been lying.

Just before he parted the bushes to leave the secluded spot he looked back to make sure the girl was still sleeping. She was.

At the path he picked himself up and started off at a trot in the direction of the cave he had found in Tommy's mind, the cave that would be his hiding place, at least for a while.

Probing Tommy's mind he learned the answer to something that had puzzled him—why Tommy and the girl had seen him but had not stopped to investigate. Superficially, seen from above, he somewhat resembled an Earth (he knew the name of the planet now) creature called a turtle. To a casual glance he was a turtle about five inches long, with its feet and head pulled into its shell. Turtles were slow-moving and unintelligent; they did not bother humans and humans seldom bothered them. True, they were edible—the concept and taste of turtle soup came to him—but unless he was hunting turtles a human would be unlikely to pick up and take home a single one only his size; it would weigh about two pounds, about his own weight, but it would yield only a few ounces of edible meat, not enough, except to a starving man, to be worth the trouble of killing and dissecting it.

The accidental resemblance had saved him. That and the actions of the four-legged—of the field mouse while it had been his host. What he had done with it had been the right

thing, if for the wrong reasons; another lucky accident. They had not been afraid of it nor would they have chased it off the path. But by biting the girl when she had picked it up and then attacking the boy when the girl had dropped it, it had aroused fear that it had had something called rabies and that it might have infected the girl by biting her. And that fear had caused Tommy to rush the girl to their trysting place so they could check to see whether she had really been bitten; otherwise they would have continued to stroll leisurely and might well have stopped when the girl had said "Look, a turtle" for a closer look. And a closer look would have shown them—well, from above they'd only have decided it was a species of turtle they hadn't seen before, but that might have led one of them to pick it up for a closer look. And that would have been bad because they would then have seen that it wasn't a turtle at all. Instead of having a plastron, bottom shell, under the carapace it was one continuous shell with no openings for head or feet. They, or someone they took it to, might all too well have decided to crack it open to see what was inside. And that would have been all for the mind thing; even if it had found itself a host meanwhile it would have died in its host as well as in its own body. The mental extension of itself that controlled a host could not have independent existence.

Now he made Tommy sprint until he was well out of sight from the path and then, having learned that he could not keep up that pace for the half mile to the cave slowed him down to a jog trot.

The entrance to the cave was small; one had to get down on hands and knees to go through it and, the mind thing saw with satisfaction, it was well screened by bushes.

Inside it was dim hut, even through Tommy's eyes, he could see. But through Tommy's memory as well as Tommy's eyes he had a full picture of

the place. (His sense of perception, which was independent of light or dark, functioned only when he was, sans host, in his own body. When in a host he was dependent upon its sensory organs, whatever they might be.) The cave wasn't a large one; it went back about twenty feet, and at its widest place, near the center it was about six feet wide and only at that point was it high enough for a man to stand erect.

At about that point the mind thing had Tommy put him down and then scabble with his hands a hole in the sand. About nine inches down his/Tommy's hands found rock. He had Tommy put him down in the hole and then cover and smooth carefully. Then, on hands and knees, back to the entrance Tommy went, carefully smoothing away as he backed the marks he had made in entering. The sand was as smooth now as when he had entered.

And he had Tommy sit just outside the cave entrance—but screened and hidden by the same bushes that hid the entrance itself—and wait.

Now there was no hurry. He was safely hidden now and he could take his time to digest all the knowledge that was in Tommy's mind, to catalog it and, using it as a basis, to lay his own long range plans.

And short range plans for his host. Already he knew that Tommy's mind was not the one he needed, ultimately, to control. But Tommy would serve for a while. Tommy probably had an average—but no better than average—I. Q. for his race (at least that was the way Tommy thought of himself) but he was only partly educated and had no knowledge whatsoever of science beyond a very few and extremely elementary principles.

But Tommy could serve him—for a while.

CHAPTER THREE

Charlotte Garner awoke, as sudden-

ly and completely as a kitten awakens, completely oriented even before she opened her eyes. Her body felt uncomfortably cool and she shivered a little and then, opening her eyes, saw why the coolness had wakened her. She'd gone to sleep in warm sunlight, now she was in shadow. That meant the sun was low in the west, down behind the thick hushes at that end of the open space. Startled, she held up her wrist watch to read it—and was even more startled. They'd slept three full hours. And even leaving this minute and walking fast, they'd be half an hour late to their respective homes for dinner. Probably their folks, or hers anyway, were beginning to worry a little already.

Quickly she turned over to awaken Tommy. Tommy wasn't there. But his clothes were there, just past where he'd been lying. After a brief shock, she realized what had happened, the only thing that could have happened. Tommy must have wakened a minute or so before she had, and before dressing himself or wakening her, he had gone outside the hushes somewhere nearby to answer a call of nature. He wouldn't have, couldn't have, gone any farther than that, for that any other reason, without his clothes. He'd be back in a minute.

And since he didn't carry or wear a watch he probably didn't realize quite how late it was. But she did. She stood up and brushed off the little grass that stuck to her and then dressed quickly; it didn't take her long to get them on. Then she sat down and strapped on the barefoot sandals, stood up again.

Still no sign of Tommy and while she wasn't worried yet, she wanted him to hurry so she called out his name, but there wasn't any answer. He'd hardly have gone out of hearing distance—but probably he was already on his way back and hadn't bothered to answer for that reason. She realized that there was probably some grass in her hair, so she went to Tom-

my's clothes and got out the little pocket comb he kept clipped in his shirt pocket, ran it a few times through her short bobbed hair, and put it back.

Still no Tommy, and now she was getting a *little* worried. Not that she could think of anything that could have happened to him. She called out his name again, much more loudly this time, and then, "Answer me. Where are you?"

She listened hard, but there was only the faint rustle of leaves in a breeze that had just sprung up. Could Tommy be trying to frighten her? No, he wouldn't do anything like that.

But what could have happened? He couldn't have gone anywhere, naked except for those bright blue short socks he hadn't taken off. Could he have fainted or had an accident? Fainting seemed impossible; Tommy was in perfect health. And if an accident—well, it would have to be the kind of accident that would make him unconscious (she didn't dare think the word *dead*). If he'd just turned an ankle or even broken a leg, he'd still have answered her. In fact, he'd have wakened her sooner by calling her. She was a light sleeper and would have heard him call her from any reasonable distance.

Really worried now, she went outside the clearing through the bushes and started to circle around it, looking everywhere, behind bushes and trees, even on the side toward the path, although he surely wouldn't have gone that way; not for the purpose she'd originally thought of as his only reason for leaving her at all—and she still couldn't think of any other.

From time to time she called his name, and she was shouting now. She spiraled out and when she realized, half an hour later, that she was a hundred yards or so from her starting point and had thoroughly searched an area with a hundred yard radius, she

was really scared. He wouldn't possibly have come this far, for the reason she had imagined.

She needed help, she realized. She hurried back to the path and started home, half walking, half running, keeping the fastest pace she thought she might possibly maintain for three miles. She'd have to tell them the truth, she realized, no matter what they thought about, or did about, Tommy and her jumping the gun. No holding that back, since Tommy's clothes would have to be the starting point of the search. But that didn't matter now. Only finding Tommy mattered.

She was a tired, panting, disheveled girl when she stumbled into her parents' living room. They were listening to the radio but her father turned it off quickly and glared at her. "Fine time! I was just about to—" Then he saw her face and changed to "What's wrong, Charl?"

She blurted it out. She was interrupted only once, by her mother's shocked voice. "You mean you and Tommy have been—" But her father stopped that. "Worry about that later, Mom. Let her finish."

Jed Garner stood up. "I'll call Gus," he said. "We'll get out there right away. He can bring Buck."

He went to the phone and called Gus Hoffman, who lived on the next farm, and started talking.

On the other end of the line, Gus Hoffman listened grimly. All he said when Garner had finished was, "Be right there."

He hung up the phone and stood a moment thinking. Then he went to a hamper of dirty clothes and found a sock of Tommy's, put it in his pocket. He'd want it to get Buck started on Tommy's trail. Not that Buck didn't already know Tommy's scent but he wouldn't know he was supposed to follow it unless there was something of Tommy's to hold in front of his nose while you said, "Find 'em, boy."

He got Buck's leash from its nail in

the kitchen and put it in another pocket. Buck was a good dog on a trail but he had one fault. Once you started him tracking you had to put him and keep him on a leash. Otherwise, since at least part of the time he wouldn't call back, he could get so far ahead you could lose him. Even following a trail, if it's a fresh and hot one, a dog can sometimes go faster than a man can keep up with him.

He made sure that he had matches, got the lantern and checked that it was full, then went out the kitchen door.

Buck was sleeping not in but in front of the doghouse Tommy had built for him. Buck was a big liver-and-white colored dog; he wasn't all one breed, but he was all hound. He was seven years old, past his prime but still with a few good years in him.

"Come on, Buck," Hoffman said, and the dog fell in behind him as he went around the house and cut across the fields to the Garner farmhouse. It was just dusk.

They'd seen him coming and came outside, the three of them. Jed Garner had a lantern too, and a shotgun under his other arm.

There weren't any greetings. Hoffman asked Charlotte, "This path, it's the one that turns off the road to the north just past the bridge?"

"Yes, Mr. Hoffman. But I'm going along. I'll have to go to show you the place where we—where we went. Where his clothes are."

"You're not going, Charl," her father said firmly. "If for no other reason that you're already so pooped out from practically running back the three miles that you'd slow us down."

"Buck will take us to the clothes," Hoffman said. "Then we'll have him circle the spot and pick up the trail. You said three miles—and it's about one to where the path starts. That'd make it about two miles back into the woods. Right?"

Charlotte nodded.

"Let's get going then," Hoffman said to Garner.

"Wait, Gus. Why don't we take my car for the first mile, along the road. Save time."

"You forget about Buck," Hoffman said. "He ain't gun-shy, but he's car-shy. If we forced him into a car he'd keep trying to jump out and anyway it'd make him so damn nervous he might not be any good to us. We'll have to walk. Come on."

The two men went out to the road and started along it. There was a bright moon; they weren't going to need the lanterns until they were in among trees. And it wasn't fully dark yet, anyway.

"Why the gun, Jed?" Hoffman asked. "Thinking of a shotgun wedding?"

"Hell no. Just that in the woods at night I feel better with one. Even though I know nothing's likely to jump me." After a minute he added, "I was just thinking, though. If we find Tommy—"

"We'll find him."

"All right, after we find him. If he's all right, I don't think we ought to make those kids wait another six months. If they're playing house anyway, what the hell, let 'em make it 'e-gal. And you wouldn't want your first grandchild born too soon after the wedding, would you? I wouldn't."

"All right," Hoffman said.

They walked in silence for a while. Then they saw the headlights of a car coming toward them on the road and Hoffman turned quickly and got a grip on Buck's collar, pulled him off the side of the road. "Wait till it's by," he said to Garner. "Don't want Buck to bolt, and he might."

After the car was past them, they started walking again.

By the time they reached the start of the path it was fully dark except for the moonlight and they stopped and lighted their lanterns. From here on part of the time they'd be under trees and need light.

They walked on. Garner asked, "Where the hell *could* Tommy have headed for, taking off stark naked that way?"

Hoffman grunted. "Let's not wonder. Let's find out."

Again they walked in silence until Hoffman said, "I figger we've come about a mile since the road. How about you?"

"I guess about that," Garner said. "Maybe a mite over."

"Then we better let Buck take over. You gal could be wrong about the distance, and we don't want to overshoot."

He put down his lantern and snapped the leash onto Buck's collar, then held Tommy's dirty sock to Buck's nose. "Find 'im, boy."

The dog sniffed the path and started off at once. They followed, Hoffman holding the leash in one hand and the lantern in the other, Garner bringing up the rear. Buck kept moving steadily but not too fast for them; there was no strain on the leash.

About a mile farther on (Charlotte's judgment of the distance had been just about right) Buck wandered slightly off the path and sniffed something.

Hoffman bent over to look. "Dead field mouse. Squashed. Come on, Buck, back to business." He pulled Buck back to the path.

Garner said, "Charl told me about that—while we were waiting for you to come over. Didn't seem important, so I didn't mention it. But it means we're right close to the place. I mean to the place where they—went to sleep."

"What did she tell you about a field mouse?"

Garner told him. And then said, "Damn funny thing, a field mouse acting like that. Say, what if the thing was rabid? It didn't bite Charl, didn't break her skin, I mean; but Tommy brushed it off his pants leg. What if his finger hit its teeth and one of 'em broke the skin a little without his re-

alizing it. Would that account for—?"

"Hell, Jed, you know better than that about rabies. If Tommy was affected, it wouldn't affect him this soon, or that way. It takes days." Hoffman rubbed his chin. "Just the same, when we find Tommy I'm going to check his hands. If there's even a scratch, we'll pick up that mouse on our way back, and have it checked. Come on, Buck, get going again."

Only about thirty paces farther on Buck turned off the path again and this time he didn't stop to sniff anything. He kept going. He led them back to where some clumps of bushes made a solid wall and started to push his way through them. Hoffman parted the bushes and held his lantern forward.

"This is it," he said. "His clothes are still here." He stepped through and Garner followed. They stood looking down.

"God damn," Hoffman said, "I'd hoped—" He didn't finish the sentence. He'd hoped the clothes would be gone, that Tommy would have returned here after Charlotte had left. He didn't know what that would have meant—since Tommy hadn't come home—but it seemed less dangerous than the alternative, Tommy being out there somewhere and still naked, whatever else might have happened to him. At any rate he was more frightened now than when he had first heard the girl's story. The clothes looked so empty. Until now this had seemed like a bad dream; it was becoming nightmare.

Buck was sniffing eagerly at the clothes and then at the grass where Tommy had lain. Then, circling, he started for the bushes, at a different point this time.

Hoffman let him through and went through behind him. "Come on, Jed," he said. "He's got the trail again, the way Tommy left."

Garner said, "Shall I bring the clothes?"

Hoffman hesitated. "All right," he

said. "When we find him, he'll need 'em and no use our having to come back."

He waited, holding Buck back, until Garner had made a bundle of the clothes and rejoined him with them.

Then he started following the pull of the leash. Back to the path first and then off it at a diagonal to the northwest.

Buck was straining hard at the leash now. Not only was the trail fresher but a man in his sock feet leaves a stronger scent than one wearing shoes. Also, on the path, there had been other if fainter human scents. Now there were none.

"Easy, boy," Hoffman said, as he and Garner followed the straining dog.

CHAPTER FOUR

The mind thing rested now. He had neatly catalogued and indexed, mentally, everything in the mind of his present host.

He knew everything about this planet Earth that Tommy knew, which was enough to give him a rough overall picture. He knew its approximate size, although not in figures, and he knew that it was mostly salt water but had considerable land area too, in several continents. He knew roughly how the world was divided into countries and the names and approximate locations and sizes of the most important of those countries.

His knowledge of local terrain and geography was much better. He knew that he was in wild country, hunting country, but only about four miles north of the nearest town. Its name was Bartlesville, and it had about two thousand inhabitants. It was in a state called Wisconsin which was a part of a country called the United States of America. The nearest large town, or small city, about forty-five miles to the southeast, was Green Bay. Something over a hundred miles south of Green Bay was Milwaukee, the near-

east large city. And ninety miles or so south of Milwaukee was a much larger city, one of the largest, Chicago. He could visualize those places; Tommy had been to them. But no farther; Chicago was as far from home as Tommy had been. But Bartlesville and the country around it he knew very well. And that was good, for this area might have to be his scene of operations for some time. In addition to its geography, he knew its flora and fauna. The flora didn't interest him but the fauna did. He had mental pictures now of all the creatures of the countryside, wild and domestic. And he knew their abilities and limitations. If he should have to use an animal host again he would know which to choose for the job at hand.

Most importantly, he knew that although man was the only intelligent species on Earth, man had science, apparently a fairly advanced science. While Tommy's knowledge of science was almost nil (he knew a little about elementary electricity, enough to wire a doorbell) he knew that science and scientists existed, and that (this was of major importance) science included electronics. The meaning of the word electronics was vague to him, but he had seen (and owned) a radio set. He had seen television. And he knew what radar did, if not how it worked. Where these things existed there was knowledge of electronics.

And the mind thing's eventual goal was to obtain control of an electronics, one who not only knew the subject but who had or could obtain access to equipment and components. It would probably take him several steps—several intervening hosts—to get there, but he knew now that it could be done if he planned properly. And he had to do it. He wanted to go home.

He came from a planet of a sun seventy-three light-years away, in the direction of the constellation Andromeda, a sun too faint from Earth ever to have been named, although it has a number in our star catalogs.

He had not come voluntarily; he had been sent. Not as a scout or as the spearhead of an invasion (although it could turn out that way if he could get back) but as an exile. He was a criminal. To explain what his crime had been would require the explanation of a social system so utterly alien to ours as to be almost incomprehensible; suffice it to say that he had committed a crime and that his punishment was exile.

He had not come in a spaceship. He had been sent along a—call it a force beam; that's a poor description of it but as nearly accurate as any other simple phrase, in our language, would be. Transmission had been instantaneous; one second he was in the projector back home, the next second he was lying beside a path in the woods north of Bartlesville, Wisconsin, and having experienced no impact on arrival.

The planet of his exile had been chosen at random, and with no knowledge of whether it was inhabited or inhabitable, out of the billions of planets in the galaxy which his race had charted but had never got around to investigating; there were so many billion planets that they never would get around to investigating more than a fraction of them. The reason why they were able to chart planets as readily as we chart stars was that their equivalent of a telescope, based on magnification of the sense of perception instead of the far inferior sense of sight, enabled them to "see" planets almost as far as we are able to see stars.

So now he was here, and now he wanted to go home. It was far from impossible, for two reasons.

First, he had been extremely lucky in having come to a planet that had not only reasonably intelligent beings, but a science and a technology, however inferior to his own. The chances had been, say, a hundred thousand to one against it. If he had been sent to an uninhabited planet, he

would have been completely helpless. If to a planet that had life but had not yet developed intelligence (like Earth of a million years ago) he *might* have been able to construct a projector to send himself back but the odds were against it. (Can you imagine the difficulties of a dinosaur, even with intelligent direction, in finding and refining germanium and then using it to make a transistor?)

Second, he would be welcomed home and pardoned—even honored—if he could get there. The exiles always had that chance, and one out of hundreds of them made it.

And a returned exile was honored very highly indeed, and became a hero, if he brought back with him news of a species better fitted for hosts than the ones in current use. And that the mind thing could do. In having Tommy carry him he had discovered the opposable thumb and it was, as far as he knew, unique in the galaxy. It made grasping and handling things so much easier. Quite possibly he could make his projector big enough to let him take a sample human host back with him. If he did that it would save them sending a scouting expedition; they could make their first slave raid in full force.

All that was within his grasp if he worked slowly and carefully and made no mistakes. He had made one already, he now realized. He had lessened his present host's value to him by making him act in a manner against human mores, thereby attracting attention to him. For a while at least Tommy Hoffman would be an object of curiosity and suspicion, which would somewhat limit his usefulness. People would be watching him to see if he did anything else that seemed strange to them.

What he should have done, and would have done if he had taken a few minutes to study Tommy's thoughts, was this: He should have had Tommy come to him and move him from his dangerously exposed po-

sition, but not all the way to the cave. Tommy could have moved him to a place of temporary concealment—the high grass only a few feet off the path would have been good enough—and then returned and lain down beside the sleeping girl and pretended to sleep himself. That would have given him time to learn enough about Tommy and the girl, about human actions and emotions, so that when they awakened, he could have appeared to her to be perfectly normal. Possibly he could even (again to use the euphemistic phrase from Tommy's mind) have "gone another round" with her. He wouldn't have enjoyed it, of course; when in a host he felt no pain when he had it killed, but neither did he share any of its pleasurable sensations.

Then they would have returned home as they had intended to do. (Once inside a host, he could control it at any reasonable distance.) And in the morning Tommy could have come back, alone, and moved him to this much better place of concealment in the cave. And then returned home without having aroused anyone's curiosity.

That's what he should have done but it was too late by the time he realized it. His alternate plan would have to suffice. It was based on the concept of something called amnesia that he had found in Tommy's mind.

Tommy could stay here on guard in front of the cave entrance all night. Early in the morning he could go back and get his clothes (the girl would have left when she got worried enough, but she wouldn't have taken them) and walk home. His story would be simple. He and the girl had got tired and lain down to rest. He'd gone to sleep. And at dawn he'd waked up in a different place, over a mile away and with no recollection of how he got there. He could hardly have walked that far in his sleep—and besides Tommy had never sleepwalked—so he must have had some

reason for going there but he couldn't remember what it was. It must be amnesia. They'd have him talk to a doctor a time or two, but nothing would come of that. And henceforth Tommy would, at least in the sight of others, appear to act completely normal—until his usefulness as a host came to an end; then he would either kill himself or, if possible, arrange his own death in some manner that would make it seem accidental.

Besides simplicity and incontrovertibility Tommy's story had another advantage; it would not cross up the girl's story, whichever way she told it. She might have been frightened enough to tell her family the whole truth—that she and Tommy had slept naked and that he had gone off in that state—or she might well have left that part out. If his first story didn't mention clothes at all, and if she hadn't, then their stories would match. Then if taxed with the fact that she had told the story differently, he could sheepishly admit that yes, he had been naked when he had gone to sleep and had awakened the same way in the morning. His original omission of that part of the story would be entirely understandable to everyone concerned.

Short and long range planning were suddenly interrupted. Through Tommy's eyes peering through the bushes that masked the cave entrance, the mind thing saw two bobbing lights coming; through Tommy's ears it heard the excited baying of a hound on a scent, and recognized the dog's voice as that of Buck, Tommy's father's dog.

Immediately he realized what had happened. Tommy's father had been much more worried than Tommy could have realized. (And probably Charlotte had told the whole truth—Tommy's leaving her without his clothes would have been more puzzling and frightening than if he had wandered off clothed.) And Tommy had thought (or rather Tommy's mind

would have thought if he himself had been the one using it) that they might come to look for him tomorrow but not tonight, after dark. And Tommy's mind simply hadn't thought at all of the possibility of Buck's being used to track him down.

But now they were coming, two men and the dog. One of the men would be Tommy's father, the other probably Charlotte's father.

And the dog would lead them straight to the cave!

He had to distract them, lead them away. Even if it cost him his present host, he couldn't let attention be drawn to the cave. And they were less than a hundred yards away and heading straight for it, the dog following Tommy's trail.

Tommy, or Tommy's body, jumped up and ran around the bushes and toward the approaching lanterns. He ran until he was within the circle of light of the first one and then stopped. Buck barked joyously and strained at the leash to run to him. Gus Hoffman shouted, "Tommy! What the hell—?"

Too near the cave. He turned and started to run again, diagonally away from the cave. He heard them start after him, still calling. "Tommy! Tommy, stop!" And he heard Garner say, "Slip the dog's leash. Buck can catch him." And his father's reply, "Sure, and run with him. We'd just lose both of them."

He couldn't run in a straight line because he had to keep to open areas where the moonlight would let him see. Occasionally, while they were still close enough to follow him by sight they could take short cuts through shadow because of their lanterns, but he could run much faster and was soon outdistancing them. Then he was definitely out of their sight and knew they'd have to let Buck do the trailing again and follow his roundabout course; that would slow them down still more.

He was able to rest a moment then,

to catch his breath, and when he started again it was at a fast trot instead of a sprint. He knew where he was going now and he began to circle to take himself back to his starting point.

And from there to the place, only a very short distance away, where he had perceived the artifact (he knew now what it was, a jackknife) before the two humans had come along the path.

It was in deep grass, and in shadow. Tommy's sense of sight didn't help at all now, and he had to have Tommy's hands grope and feel. It was awkward, but he knew where it was within inches and finally Tommy's fingers closed over it and picked it up.

He broke one of Tommy's thumb nails trying to open the half-length rusted blade, but finally got it open with the other nail.

Without hesitation Tommy slashed one of his wrists, changed the knife to his other hand and slashed the other wrist. Both cuts were deep, almost to the bone, and blood spurted freely. He didn't lie down, but within a minute loss of blood blacked him out and he fell heavily.

He was dead when the two men and the dog reached him.

And the mind of the mind thing was safely back within itself, buried under nine inches of sand in the cave.

CHAPTER FIVE

It had been a bad night for Gus Hoffman.

He had waited with the body while Jed Garner had gone back for help. While he waited he dressed Tommy's body in the clothes Garner had been carrying. Not because he had any intention of lying to the sheriff about how they had found Tommy, but because it just didn't seem decent for the body to be taken in naked.

Garner went straight home. After reaching the road he passed three other farms before his own, but he wanted Charlotte to be the first to know

and didn't want to tell her over a phone. She took the news more quietly than he had dared to hope, mostly because she was ready for it; she had known instinctively from the moment she'd had to start home alone that she'd never see Tommy alive again.

Then he'd phoned the sheriff at Wilcox, the county seat, twenty miles away. The sheriff came in an ambulance to carry the body into town and, so the body could be examined quickly, he brought the coroner with him. Garner took them to the spot and the four men, taking turns, carried Tommy out of the woods on a stretcher. Buck stayed with the party until the engine of the ambulance started; then he bolted home across the fields.

At the mortuary in Bartlesville the coroner examined the body while the sheriff talked to Hoffman and Garner. The coroner joined them to report that there was no doubt about the cause of death—loss of blood from the slashed wrists—and that the only other marks on the body were briar scratches on the legs and cuts and bruises on the bottoms of the feet. He was willing to do an autopsy if the sheriff requested it but said he didn't see what an autopsy could possibly bring out that wasn't already obvious.

The sheriff had gone along with that but said he thought an inquest should be held. There'd be no doubt about the verdict, suicide while of unsound mind, but he hoped something might be brought out that would help clear up the mystery of the reason for sudden and violent insanity in a boy who had never shown the slightest symptom even of instability. Also there was a minor mystery in the suicide weapon, the rusty, broken pocket knife. Hoffman was positive that it had never been Tommy's. And both Hoffman and Garner swore that when they had seen Tommy briefly before he had run away from them he could not possibly have been carrying anything; his hands had been open at his sides. He must have picked up the

knife where he had used it, but how could he have known it was there, or found it in the dark?

"All right," the sheriff said, "we'll set the inquest for two o'clock tomorrow afternoon. That okay with everybody?"

Hoffman and Garner nodded, but the coroner asked, "Why so soon, Hank?"

"Had this in mind, Doc. Something just might come out at the inquest that might change our minds about an autopsy. Of course if there is an autopsy, the sooner the better. We'll have the inquest right here at the mortuary, good a place as any here and there's no use moving it over to Wilcox. And, Gus, right after the inquest you can go ahead and make funeral arrangements. As soon as convenient if there's not going to be an autopsy—and I doubt if there will be. Who was Tommy's doctor? Doc Gruen?"

"Yeah," Hoffman said. "Not that Tommy saw him often. He was pretty healthy."

"We'll put him on the stand anyway. And maybe some of Tommy's teachers—but I'll check with them first, see if they ever noticed anything unusual that ought to go in the record. No use calling them if they haven't."

He turned to Garner. "Uh—Jed. Charlotte'll have to testify. I'll go as easy on her as I can, but it'll have to be brought out Tommy was naked when he went off. To show he was—uh—off his rocker even then and didn't leave her for any sane reason like being mad at her, and then go off his rocker after. But what I'm getting at is—I can clear the court, except for the coroner's jury, while we take her testimony. Want me to?"

Garner scratched his head and thought a minute. He said, "I guess not, Sheriff. I think I can answer for her that she'd just as soon testify in front of everybody. Hell, the whole story's going to get out anyway and

maybe sound worse and like we're ashamed of her. Damn it, what they did wasn't so bad—they were in love and engaged, just jumped the gun a little. Don't tell my wife I told you this, but she and I did the same thing, so how can we bawl out Charlotte? And if the town or the neighbors turn thumbs down on her for it, the hell with 'em. I'll sell the farm and move. Always kind of wanted to go to California anyway."

So things had been left. Gus Hoffman had got home by one o'clock, home to the loneliest, emptiest house he'd ever known. He'd thought he wouldn't be able to sleep until he remembered that there was most of a pint of medicinal whisky in the cupboard. He got it, and a glass. He wasn't a drinking man; he took an occasional nip to be sociable on special occasions, but this was more whisky than he ordinarily drank in the course of a year. But tonight if this was enough whisky to bring oblivion, he was willing to let it. Tonight was the worst night of his life, even worse than the night his wife had died. For one thing, he'd known for weeks that she was dying; he'd been prepared for it. For another, he'd still had Tommy. Tommy had been three then, but Gus had managed to keep him on the farm and raise him there, with the help, until Tommy was of school age, of a woman who came daily to take care of him while Gus worked the farm.

Now he was completely alone, and permanently alone. He knew that he'd never marry again. Not because he was too old—he was still a year short of fifty—but because never since his wife's death had he ever even thought about living with another woman, or wanting one. He didn't know why it was impossible for him but it was. Something in him had died when his wife had died. It was something psychological, of course, but it was something more than psychological impotence. A man suffering from that can still want a woman, at least in the ah-

strait, and freeze only when he tries to have one in the flesh. But Gus Hoffman couldn't even want one; nor could he entertain the thought of making a sexless marriage just to have a woman around the house for companionship and as a help-mate. He didn't want a woman around the house, even on that basis. (Having Charlotte around as Tommy's wife would have been different, of course; he'd looked forward to that.)

All his hopes had been in Tommy. He was not a demonstrative man and had never let Tommy know how important to him had been the boy's decision to stay on the farm with him, even after his marriage. He'd wanted grandchildren and now he'd never have them; he was now the last of his line, a dead end.

Unless— With his third drink a sudden blazing hope came to him. Unless he was already scheduled to have a grandson. Charlotte could be pregnant and not even know it yet. Or had Tommy taken precautions against that happening?

Suddenly he wanted to know right away. He got up from the kitchen table to go to the telephone. But sat down again, realizing he shouldn't call the Garners in the middle of the night to ask them that. In fact, he shouldn't ask them at all. He should wait and see, and keep his hope alive for as long as he could.

Meanwhile it would give him something to think about besides his grief and loneliness. He could even plan. If and when Garner would learn that Charlotte was pregnant he'd surely sell out and move away; he'd said he'd do that anyway if he found Charlotte in disgrace in the town or neighborhood—and while an affair might be forgiven her, an illegitimate child certainly wouldn't. Well, Gus Hoffman would sell out too and go with them, wherever they went, California or the moon. If possible, he'd talk Garner into their buying a farm together so he could live with them—or make

himself living quarters in the barn if they didn't want him underfoot in the house—and help raise his grandson. Or granddaughter; he'd even settle for that. If Jed wouldn't agree to buying a farm jointly, he'd buy his as near as possible. The next-door one if he could get it, even if he had to pay a premium price to talk someone into selling it. Price need be no object, thank God; he had twelve thousand dollars in the bank and in investments besides what he'd get for his farm here. And he'd had some pretty good offers for that.

He'd finished the whisky and had realized that almost for the first time in his life, certainly for the first time since his twenties, he was drunk, physically drunk. When he stood up he found he had to hold onto things to keep from falling. He didn't bother to go upstairs or to undress; he made his way as far as the living room sofa. He managed to get his shoes off, and that was the last he remembered.

That had been the night.

And now it was morning. He'd wakened at dawn. He'd made coffee and forced himself to eat some oatmeal. He'd done his milking and put out the cans for the dairy's route man to pick up, and done the few other things that had to be done. All that took two hours and it was still early. There was still work—there's always work to do on a farm—but nothing that couldn't wait until late afternoon, after the inquest. And he'd thought of something more important than work that he wanted to do.

He felt to make sure that Buck's leash and Tommy's sock were still in his pocket from last night, and then called Buck and walked across the fields to Jed Garner's farm.

Garner was hoeing in a small garden patch behind the house. He stopped and leaned on his hoe as Hoffman came up.

"Morning," Hoffman said. "How's Charlotte?"

"Still asleep, I hope. Didn't get to

sleep till God knows when last night. What's on your mind, Gus?"

"Just dropped by to tell you where I'm heading. Back to where—where we were last night."

"Why?"

"Just want a look around by daylight. The place where we found Tommy's clothes, the place where we found him. We might of missed something, just with lanterns. I don't know what, but if there's anything to find now's the time, before the inquest."

"Makes sense," Garner said.

"Another thing, why I'm taking Buck. I'm going to where we first saw Tommy, when he ran up to us. See if Buck can backtrail him from there, find out where he'd been, in that direction. Dunno it'll tell me anything, but I want to know."

"I'll go with you," Garner said. "Might as well. Don't feel like working and I guess you're the same way. Wait till I tell Maw."

Gus Hoffman waited for him, and the two men started off.

The mind thing wasn't worried, but he was annoyed with himself for having panicked and killed his first, and thus far only, human host. Subsequent and calmer thought showed him that it hadn't been necessary. He had to lead them away from the cave, yes. But after that there had been no need for him to make his host suicide. After he'd led them a safe distance he could have fallen and pretended to be asleep or unconscious when they reached him. When they awakened him he could have been surprised to find himself there, especially naked, and remember nothing since going to sleep beside his girl at their trysting place. True, his case would not have been diagnosed as simple amnesia, not after running away from his father as he had, but it would still have been called temporary insanity. They wouldn't have locked him up in an asylum for that, which had been the thought that had made him make Tom-

my destroy himself; incarcerated, he would have been completely valueless as a host; also, he knew from Tommy's mind, mental institutions take elaborate precautions to prevent their inmates from committing suicide, and he might have been stuck in Tommy's mind for quite a while. And an unsuccessful attempt at suicide might have got him into a padded cell, which would have made it impossible.

But he realized now that they would not have incarcerated Tommy, not for one brief period of temporary insanity. They'd have watched him for a while, but not too closely for too long, if he seemed again perfectly normal. There'd have been a talk with the doctor, of course, and he would probably have recommended taking or sending Tommy to a specialist, a psychiatrist. But that would be good because, since there were no psychiatrists in Bartlesville or even in Wilcox (that Tommy had known of) it would have meant a trip to Green Bay or possibly even to Milwaukee. Either of those places would have a public library large enough to be worth while and if he could have had some free time—or even made a getaway for a while, if accompanied—he could have made at least a good start on learning some of the things he would have to know.

Yes, as Tommy's mind would have expressed it, he had goofed. But he couldn't blame himself too much. It is tremendously difficult immediately to understand all the ins and outs of a completely alien world, a completely alien culture. Especially since thus far his only concepts of that world, beyond his immediate range of perception, had come from the mind of a not too bright, not too well educated high school boy who had taken no interest in any serious subject except farming. Tommy would have made an excellent farmer.

The main disadvantage of his present position, safe though he thought it was, was the fact that from here it would be almost impossible to get an-

other human host. Men came through these woods, usually to hunt, but the chances of one happening to go to sleep near enough, within the forty-yard extreme range of his perceptive sense, were remote.

To get his next human host he'd have to use an animal host first, to transport him near enough to a place where a human would be sleeping. There would be risk in that, during transport, but it was a risk he would have to take. And, although he had actually encountered none as yet within his range, he'd learned from Tommy that there were such animals, several of them. A deer could carry him easily in its mouth, so could a bear. There should be air transport, too. A chicken hawk, since it could carry off a chicken heavier than he was, would be ideal. An owl might serve; Tommy had known that owls swoop down on mice and fly off with them, but he'd had no clear idea of how heavy an object an owl could fly with.

On the whole, he thought, a bird would be better. A deer or a bear might have trouble with fences, and if there was a dog in the farmyard it would bark and waken the household. But no dog would notice a chicken hawk circling down in the middle of the night to leave something on the roof. Then, as soon as the hawk had flown away and killed itself or got itself killed, he would have his choice of hosts among however many people would be sleeping in the house. Then the first act of his new host would be to retrieve the mind thing's corporeal self from its exposed position on the roof and put it in a safe place of concealment.

But there was no hurry; this time he would think every detail through and make no more mistakes. Besides, no owl or chicken hawk had as yet come within his perception range. Nor a deer nor a bear. Only field mice, rabbits, such other small creatures had as yet passed within range.

But he had studied them, each of

them. One can never tell when a small animal might, for some special purpose—burrowing under a wall, for instance—make a better host, very temporarily, than a larger one.

Once he had studied an animal inside and out—studied it himself, not just examined the concept of it in a host's mind—he could get himself a host of that species at any distance up to about ten miles, provided that one was sleeping within that range. Having studied a rabbit, for instance, he now had only to concentrate on the concept of a rabbit if one was sleeping within ten miles or so. The nearest one, if there were several or many. Once a hawk had flown past within his range—no matter at how fast a speed—he'd be able to get himself a hawk for a host any time he wanted one, if it were during the night when hawks slept. Sooner or later hawk, owl, deer, bear would come within range; he'd have himself a wide variety of potential animal hosts.

Things would have been easy for him—there'd have been no problem at all to speak of—if the same thing could have been done to highly intelligent hosts—which, in the case of this planet meant human beings. Such creatures automatically resisted being taken over, and there was always a mental struggle sometimes lasting for seconds. To win he had to use all his power and to have the creature, the individual creature, within the limit of his sense of perception. And, of course, asleep.

That had been found to be true on almost all the inhabited planets which his species had visited or occupied. But there were rare exceptions and during the night he had experimented to make sure Earth was not one of them.

He tried a field mouse first, concentrating on one by using the one which had been his first terrestrial host as a prototype. Annoyingly, it took him almost an hour to kill it so he could get his mind back into him-

self. First he had tried running it head-on into a tree and then into a stone. But it was so light, had so little inertial mass, that even against the stone the impact had served only to stun it momentarily. It couldn't climb well enough, he discovered, to get sufficiently high into a tree for a fall to kill it. He had taken it into the open, into a patch of bright moonlight, and had run it in circles there, hoping that the movement would draw the attention of an owl or some other nocturnal predator. But no predator seemed to be around. Finally he did what he should have done in the first place; he examined its thoughts and memories, such as they were. And learned that there was water nearby, a shallow brook. The field mouse had immediately run to and into the water, and drowned itself.

Then back in himself in the cave again, he made his second experiment. He knew that there would be men sleeping within a few miles, past the edge of the woods to the south. And within ten miles in that direction was the town of Bartlesville where hundreds of men would be asleep. Using Tommy as his prototype, he concentrated on *man*, any man asleep. Nothing happened.

He made one further experiment. With some intelligent species it was possible to take over one at a distance if, instead of concentrating on the species, one concentrated on an individual, one which had already been studied and memorized. After studying Tommy but before entering him he had studied the girl Charlotte, inside and out. He tried. Again nothing happened.

Although he couldn't have known it, Charlotte wasn't asleep as yet; she had gone to bed but was still crying into her pillow. But that didn't matter because it wouldn't have worked if she had been sleeping; mankind was no exception to the general run of intelligent creatures in respect to the

distance at which he could make one his host.

After that he had rested; not sleeping, for his species never slept, but postponing further active thinking and planning. In any case he would have to wait until he had had a chance to study more useful potential hosts than the rabbits, field mice and such which were all that had thus far passed within his ken. No larger creature came that night.

But now he heard—felt the vibrations of—something large coming his way. Two somethings, he decided—then three. Two bipeds and a smaller (but still much larger than a rabbit) quadruped. He concentrated his perception to its uttermost limit and within a minute or two they were within its range. The same trio that had come last night trailing Tommy. Tommy's father, Charlotte's, and Buck, the dog, straining at the leash and heading straight for the cave. Taking Tommy's back trail to see where he had been before he had run toward them.

But *why*? He'd recognized the possibility of their doing so, but had discounted it, not seeing any reason why they would be interested in where Tommy had been, once he was dead. Besides, since Tommy, he had had no host or potential host capable of defending him or moving him. Nothing bigger than a rabbit. The sudden thought came to him of fipding a rabbit, if one were sleeping near enough, and having it run across the trail to distract the dog. But as quickly he realized that it wouldn't work. The dog was on a leash and if he tried to run after a rabbit they'd hold him back and put him on the trail again.

He was completely helpless. If they found him there was nothing he could do about it, nothing at all. But he didn't panic because the chance that they would find him was still slight. They'd have no reason for digging. They'd find the cave, of course, and enter it. They'd wonder why Tommy

had come here—but they wouldn't dig, he felt almost sure.

Now Buck was leading them around the bushes into sight of the entrance, paused briefly to sniff where Tommy had crouched behind the bushes, and then went into the cave. Or started into it; Hoffman pulled him back.

"Damn," Garner said. "A cave, he came to. Wish now we'd of brought a gun or two and a flashlight or two. Size of that entrance, it's just the kind of cave a bear might pick."

Hoffman said, "If Tommy was in there last night, there wasn't a bear there then. And a bear's more likely to be to home by night than by day."

The mind thing understood, of course. It now knew the language that was being spoken. Before it had had a human host, such words had been only meaningless sounds—as the sounds Tommy and the girl had made to one another along the path and in their hiding place before they had gone to sleep.

"Just the same, I'm going in," Hoffman said.

"Just a minute, Gus. I'll go in with you. But we might as well be sensible. Take that leash off Buck's collar and let him go in first. If there is anything dangerous in there, he's got a hell of a lot better chance than either of us of getting out safe. He'll be on his feet and we'll be on hands and knees."

"Guess that's sensible." Hoffman unsnapped the leash from Buck's collar, and Buck darted into the cave. Halfway, as far as Tommy had gone, and that was the end of the trail. He lay down.

The men listened for a while. "Guess it's all right," Hoffman said. "Nothing could of hurt him so fast he couldn't of let out a yip. I'm going in."

He entered on his hands and knees, and Garner followed. When they reached the center of the cave where Buck lay, they found the ceiling high

enough and stood up. It was dim, but they could see a little.

"Well, this is it," Garner said. "Reckon this is as far in as he come, since Buck stopped here. And there's nothing here, but it's nice and cool. Let's sit down and rest a minute before we go back."

They sat down. The mind thing studied the dog. It was his first chance to do so, and this was thus far the biggest potential animal host he had had a chance to study.

Henceforth, Buck would be his if he ever needed a dog. Or the nearest other dog that happened to be asleep.

Buck went to sleep. The mind thing considered, but waited. In Buck, he would have only Buck's senses, not his own.

"Trying to figure why he came here," Hoffman said.

"Anybody's guess, Gus. He was out of his mind, that's all. Probably discovered this cave when he was a kid and remembered it, came here to hide from—from whatever. You can't figure what's going through a guy's mind when he's out of his mind."

"Could be, to hide. But what if he came here to hide *something*. Or dig up something he'd hid here before? Don't ask me what, but this is soft sand, easy digging even with your hands."

"What would he be hiding? Or going to dig up?"

"Dunno. But if we found anything here—"

The struggle was less negligible than that with the mind of a field mouse, but the mind thing was in Buck's mind almost instantly. Buck lifted his head.

He—the mind thing in Buck—considered. He probably couldn't kill both of these men, but he could manage with a sudden attack to get in bites on both of them before they could subdue or kill him. That would certainly distract them from digging, at least right away. Probably it would send them hurrying back to town and a doctor.

If not because the bites were bad enough then because of the same fear of rabies that Tommy and the girl had felt.

Garner said, "Not now, Gus. Look, I don't think we'll find anything or learn anything, but I'll go along on coming back with you and trying, tomorrow. Too dark in here to do a good job without flashlights or a lantern, for one thing, and if we do it at all we might as well do a good job and be sure, huh? And it'll go quicker if we have a spade and a rake. Besides, there isn't time now. We won't get home much before lunch as it is, and after lunch we got to get cleaned up and dressed, for the inquest."

"Guess you're right, Jed," Gus said. "Okay, we might as well take off now. Least, we learned one thing we can tell at the inquest. Where Tommy went. And where he must of stayed till he saw our lanterns coming. If he'd left the cave here when he saw our lanterns he'd of met us just about where he did."

Buck put his head down again. When the men left to crawl out of the cave, he followed them, trotted alongside Hoffman as the real Buck would have done, for the two miles back to the road.

There he bolted suddenly away from them. Along the road, but east, in the opposite direction from the way they'd be going. Not toward the cave, back into the woods; he didn't want them remotely to suspect that he might be going back there. Hoffman called after him but he paid no attention and kept running.

Until he was out of sight around a bend. He dropped to a trot and cut into the woods. There was no path here but, without regard to Buck's senses or his knowledge of the terrain, the mind thing had perfect orientation; he went straight back to the cave.

Buck dug through nine inches of sand and picked up the mind thing's shell in his mouth, carried it out of

the cave and put it down gently. Then he went back into the cave and filled in the hole he had dug. When he had filled it in he rolled over it several times to eliminate all signs that there had ever been a hole there. Then he went outside and picked up the mind thing again in his mouth. It was no heavier than a partridge, and he was as soft mouthed as he would have been in carrying a wounded bird.

He trotted into the woods, avoiding paths or even game trails, looking for the wildest, most secluded spot. In thick, high grass, screened by bushes, he found a small hollow log. It would serve, at least for a while. With his mouth he placed the mind thing into one end of the hollow log and with a paw pushed it in farther, completely out of sight.

Then he trotted on, in the same direction—so that if anyone with another dog should follow Buck's trail, he'd simply be led past the log, not to it—and a hundred yards away sat down while the mind thing considered.

He was safe now from being found when the men came back to the cave to dig. But did he want to keep Buck as a host for a while? He considered carefully and decided against it. Buck had served his purpose, and if he stayed in Buck he had only Buck's senses; he could not study other potential hosts and ready himself for them. He wanted to be able to get, when he wanted one, a hawk, an owl, a deer, other animals. And while in Buck he could not so ready himself by studying other creatures as they passed near him.

Buck trotted ahead, turning slowly till he was heading back toward the road.

At the edge of the road he waited until a car came along. Then, at the last moment and before the driver could have time even to touch the brakes, he dashed forward, right under its wheels.

And back in himself in the hollow log two minutes later (it had taken

Buck just that long to die) the mind thing thought back over everything he had just done and decided that he had made no mistake this time.

Nor had he, except for one he could not possibly have foreseen. He should have had Buck wait for another car. The driver of the car that killed Buck had been Ralph S. Staunton, Ph. D., Sc. D., professor of physics, and one of the most brilliant men in the country, with one of the most lively curiosities among brilliant men. If he had not run over Buck that day, he would not have attended the inquest on Tommy Hoffman.

CHAPTER SIX

Dave Tabor, reporter (general assignment) for the Milwaukee Journal, looked at the electric clock on the wall and saw that it lacked only nine minutes of his quitting time; he turned back to his typewriter and started pounding it again. The story he was writing wasn't important—an interview with a visiting celebrity—and the last edition of today's paper was long since in, so it wouldn't be used till tomorrow, and he wanted to finish the story while it was fresh in his mind.

A copy boy came by, distributing mail, and dropped a letter on his desk. He glanced at it to see whom it was from and read the return address: R. S. Staunton, Gen. Del., Bartlesville, Wis. What was Doc doing in Wisconsin, wherever in Wisconsin Bartlesville was? Then he remembered that it was vacation time for professors and that Doc was an enthusiastic fisherman; that explained it. But why so thick an envelope? He'd hardly be writing that long a letter, so he must be enclosing something.

He pulled his mind back to the story he was writing and managed to finish it exactly on time. But he couldn't read the letter yet; he had a date to pick up Jean and didn't want

to keep her waiting. Jean Morris, his fiancée, got off work at the same time he did—she was receptionist for an advertising agency—but that was on Wisconsin Avenue and five blocks away, so she was always waiting when he got there. Which was good in one way; it solved the parking problem. She watched for his car, so he could double park long enough to let her get in.

So he put the letter in his pocket unopened when he left. He could take time at least to skim it while they were having a few drinks to kill time until they were ready to eat.

Jean was tall and slender; five feet eight inches tall, to be exact, but since Dave was six-one, that didn't worry him; she couldn't top him even in her highest heels. She was sleek and blonde and, he thought, very very beautiful. He was still not over his amazement that she had promised to marry him in November. He himself would have liked to marry her right away, but she was adamant about November. Her mother was in Europe, doing something or other for a government agency there, and would be back in early November; Jean insisted on waiting until her mother could meet him first, and then be at the wedding. He sometimes wondered what would happen if her mother, on meeting him, turned thumbs down—but he didn't worry too much. The mother, according to Jean and according to a letter or two of hers he'd read, sounded like a pretty good old girl. And besides Jean was well of age; she was twenty-four (to his twenty-nine). And her mother already knew of the engagement and hadn't even asked that they await her return; that had been Jean's idea. He was much more worried that Jean, given almost four months, might change her mind and decide she was making a mistake; he still couldn't see why she loved him.

When she was in the car and he'd started it moving again so as not to

block traffic, he asked, "Any preference where we go for a drink, darling?"

"My place, Davey. And we're eating there too, for a change. You've been spending too much money on our eating out—about twice a week and, with drinks, more than ten dollars each time. You should be saving for furniture."

"But, damn it—"

"We'll have the place to ourselves. My apartment-mate is staying downtown to eat and then going to a movie she specially wants to see. She won't be home till around ten. When I learned that yesterday evening I went out and laid in some food for us."

"In that case, swell," Dave said. "Is there anything I can pick up for us on the way? How's the liquor supply?"

"We-ell, I think there's enough, but if you want to play safe you could pick up a bottle of gin. There's plenty of vermouth; the way you make martinis one bottle of that is a year's supply."

He stopped at a liquor store to pick up the gin, and then drove to her apartment building on Prospect Avenue. Inside the door of the apartment they kissed, and Dave would have gladly kept on doing so, and more, until the ten o'clock deadline and to hell with eating. But after a minute or two she pushed herself away from him, laughingly, although she was breathing a bit hard, as he was. "Make the martinis," she said. "We'll have a lifetime for that."

"A lifetime from now," he said gloomily. But he made a pitcher of martinis while she went into the bedroom and changed from her working clothes into something comfortable for a warm summer evening; sandals, slacks and a simple sleeveless blouse.

He was pouring the drinks when she came out. They sat down with them. It was then, the first time since he got it that he'd been at leisure, that he remembered the letter. He took it from his pocket and told Jean about

it, asked her if she minded if he glanced through it just to make sure it was nothing urgent or important. And of course she didn't mind.

His first surprise on opening it was to see that there wasn't any enclosure; it was all letter, six pages, five and a half of which were filled with single-spaced typing. "Good Lord," he said, deciding he'd better read only the opening now; he could read the rest later while Jean was cooking their dinner.

But he'd read only a few paragraphs when he looked up, and across at Jean. "Darling," he said, "I think you'd better read this too because it's something that might affect my, which means our, short range plans. It's from Doc Staunton, a friend of mine; he's in Bartlesville, Wisconsin, wherever that is, and he wants me to come up there. Shall I pass you each page as I finish it, or should I go back to the beginning and read it out loud?"

"Read it aloud," she said. "I like the sound of your voice. But first tell me who this Doc Staunton is, and something about him. I don't remember you're having mentioned him, if you have. Is he a medical doctor?"

"No, he's not an M. D., but he's a doctor twice over—Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Science—and one of the top scientists in the country. If I haven't mentioned him it's because I don't like name-dropping."

"Should I know the name? It doesn't register."

"Well, I don't suppose too many laymen know of him, but any scientist would, and most reporters. He's famous, all right. *Time* wanted to write him up for a cover story a couple of years ago, but he turned them down. For a workaday job he's a professor of physics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology; he could probably head the department if he wanted to, but he hates administrative work and would rather teach and do research.

"But he gets to spend only about half his time teaching, because the

government keeps grabbing him off for one project or another. He was on Manhattan Project, that developed the A-bomb. Nuclear physics isn't his specialty, although he probably knows as much about the subject as anyone except the few really top men in the field. But electronics was involved even in that project, and he's probably the top man in electronics, theoretical or practical. And he's a whiz at pure math, close to Einstein.

"Electronics really got important with the rocketry program and they've had him on one project after another since it got going strong. The television part of the lunar probes, for example. And the advanced radar that tracks rockets, things like that."

"I'm impressed," Jean said. "But—and meaning no deprecation of you, Dave—how come a man like that happens to be a friend of yours?"

He grinned. "Sheer nepotism. He and my father were each other's best friend all through college—that is, all through the six years Dad went; he quit with a Master's and went in for teaching, but Staunton went on for his doctorates. They stayed close friends though, even though they didn't see one another too often after that. Incidentally, he's my Godfather. Dad was feeling mildly religious about the time I was born, enough to have me baptized. Doc came several hundred miles to stand up for me, if that's the phrase to use for what a Godfather does at a baptism. And Doc's stayed a bachelor, so like as not I'm the nearest thing to a relative he has living.

"Anyway, we've kept in touch more or less, even since Dad died. Let's see, that was five years ago and Dad died at fifty. Since he and Doc were the same age, give or take a year, that means Doc's about fifty-five now. Last time I saw him was two years ago when I took a vacation trip to Cape Cod. I called him up from Provincetown to ask him if I should drop across to Boston to see him—but it

worked out even better than that. He had the coming weekend free and told me to stay in Provincetown and he'd join me there; we had two full days together."

"What's he doing in Wisconsin, Dave?"

"The letter covers that. But before I start reading, we need refills." He got the pitcher of martinis—he'd taken the ice out, of course, so it wouldn't melt and dilute them, and had put it in the refrigerator to stay cold—and refilled their glasses.

When he sat down again he picked up the letter and said, "Here goes. Dear Dave: I need your help. To put it more honestly, I would like to have your help, if you can get up here for at least a few days, preferably longer. Have you taken your vacation yet this year? I hope not, and I hope you can arrange to take it right away or at least very soon, so you can spend it with me. If so, bring your fishing gear—there's excellent fishing quite nearby—and your gun or guns; deer are out of season, of course, but there's still some hunting. And even if we don't hunt you can improve your marksmanship, if you wish, as I'm doing; I've rigged a rifle range. I have my chess set too, and playing cards. How's your gin rummy coming? Seems to me I took you for a few dollars the last time we played.

"But you are wondering why I'd like your help in addition to your company. There is a mystery here, and I'd like to have it solved, for the sake of my immortal curiosity. I'm not involved, not in any serious way. Running over a dog is what got me into the case; otherwise I'd probably never have heard of it—or at least wouldn't have learned enough of the details to make me curious.

"And I want your help because your experience as a reporter (seven years now, isn't it?) has taught you how to talk to people and get information from them. I'm very poor at that. Also, if you want to use it that way, it

gives you an excuse to ask questions and dig around in a way I could never do without making people suspicious of me. Not that I'm suggesting that you try to get sent up here as an assignment; I think it would be better if you didn't. For one reason, there's nothing that would make a story for an out-of-town paper to send a reporter to cover—not on the surface. The coroner's verdict was suicide while of unsound mind, and that's all it appears to be—unless one studies it in context with some other facts.

"But before I go into the story let me give you background—my background, that is. Bartlesville, to save you hunting for it on a map, is forty-six miles roughly northwest of Green Bay, on the highway (I forget its number) that goes on through Wilcox and eventually to St. Paul and Minneapolis. My place—might as well give you directions for finding it now—is eight miles outside Bartlesville, roughly northeast, on a country road that dead-ends right there. The road hasn't a name that I know of, but you find Sycamore Street in Bartlesville, take it out of town to the north and you'll find yourself on my road; you'll pass farms on both sides of it for about four miles, then it curves east and from there on it's bounded on the north by woods, virgin country. To the south you'll pass a few more farms—and then the road will start to peter out on you. But keep on; it's passable. When it ends completely, you're there, in my front yard.

"Not mine, literally; it belongs to a friend of mine who discovered it a few years ago when he was hunting and fishing around here. When he found he could buy it for almost nothing, he did so, and had it restored enough to make it liveable-in, with the thought that it would be an ideally secluded place to spend his summers, alone or with a guest or two if he wanted guests.

"And it is that. A big six-room farmhouse with wild country instead

of a farm all around it. There'd been a farm once, or an attempt to make one, and there are still signs of it, but you can bound what had once been the cleared area only because there are no trees there large enough to be more than ten or twelve years old. If it was ever fenced in, someone must have salvaged both wire and posts; I've seen no sign of either.

"All of the rooms are furnished by now, some of them a bit sketchily—but fancy furniture and wall-to-wall carpeting would be ridiculous here anyway. In some ways it's a bit primitive. No telephone; the cost of stringing wire at least three miles beyond the last phone would be prohibitive. But I do have electricity, furnished by a little generator run by a gasoline engine. There's a quite satisfactory oil stove for cooking. No provision for heating except a fireplace big enough to burn small logs, but that doesn't matter, since the owner intends to use the place only in summer. He's tied up this summer, though; they've got him out at White Sands, and when I happened to mention to him before he left Boston that I was looking for a place to hide out from the F. B. I. for a couple of months, he offered me the use of this place, and I jumped at the chance."

"Good Lord," Jean said. "Is he ever going to get to the mystery he started to tell about?" Jean was an avid reader of mysteries and solver of puzzles.

Dave chuckled. "He'll get to it. He's not verbose, just thorough. The scientific mind. And besides, since he's asking me up there, what he's telling me is relevant."

He started reading again. "If you're wondering, the reason I didn't look you up when coming through Milwaukee was that I didn't come through Milwaukee. I didn't want to waste several days driving, so I flew, and caught a plane from Detroit direct to Green Bay. I bought a used station wagon there and I'll resell it there when I'm ready to fly back. At a loss,

I expect, but not as much of a loss as renting a car for two full months would set me back.

"But to my mystery. My minor role in it started this afternoon at about one o'clock, at which time I was about halfway between home and Bartlesville, driving in to get some supplies. Suddenly a dog ran from some bushes alongside the road directly in front of my car, so suddenly and so close that a front wheel and a back wheel had both run over it before I could even touch the brakes. It took me about twenty to thirty yards to stop, and then I walked back. The dog was obviously dying, with blood running out of its mouth, and there wasn't a thing I could do except wait a minute until I was sure that it was dead and then move it to the side of the road. I didn't risk touching it while it was alive, not that I could have done it any good anyway, because the thought had come to me that it just might have been rabid and therefore running blindly. It was difficult to see how a normal dog could have failed to hear my car coming (it's not exactly silent) even if the bushes from which it ran had kept it from seeing the car coming.

"Of course I made a mental note of the description of the dog—it was a hound, male, liver and white—and its markings, so I could describe it in town and, if anyone could identify it, look up the dog's owner and tell him what had happened.

"In town while I was making purchases at several different places I described the dog and, on the third try, found someone who identified it. Its name was Buck and it belonged to a farmer on my road, named Gus Hoffman. And Hoffman would be in town because his son had committed suicide last night and an inquest on the death was being held at the local mortuary.

"I went to the mortuary and found the inquest just starting and, since I'd never heard one, I was mildly curious

as to how one was run, and I stayed at the back and listened. I now almost wish that I hadn't, because although my curiosity is satisfied as to how inquests are conducted, it's absolutely bursting its bounds in several other directions. I've got a pretty good memory and since the inquest was only three hours or so ago I think I can give at least the important parts of the testimony almost verbatim. I'm going to try, and I'm making a carbon of this letter so I can refer back to it later if my memory gets cloudy on any point."

Dave Tabor cleared his throat. "It's not exactly dry reading, but I'm getting dry. Intermission while I make some more martinis."

Jean jumped up. "I'll make them this time, so you can keep on reading. You can't stop now."

Dave resumed reading, and by the time his martini glass was refilled he was too interested to reach for it. Not until he had read to the last of the testimony that had been given by the four people who had been called besides the coroner, who had described the condition of the body. Charlotte Garner, Gus Hoffman, Jed Garner and Dr. Gruen, Tommy's physician, in that order. And the verdict, which had taken only minutes and had been the only possible one, suicide while of unsound mind.

Even then he took only a sip before reading on. "When things broke up I didn't go to Hoffman; I managed to get the sheriff alone instead, and told him about running over the dog. I asked him whether I should tell Hoffman or not. He scratched his head and said he reckoned it might not be a good idea, just yet, to hit him with it; that Gus thought Buck had run off and after a few days when he didn't return would decide he must be dead, but that way he'd get used to the idea gradually. And then he, the sheriff, would tell him so he could quit wondering.

"And then the sheriff told me some-

thing that makes the whole thing even screwier, something that hadn't come out in the testimony because it hadn't been relevant there. The dog Buck was psychopathically afraid of automobiles—he was car-shy as some dogs are gun-shy—and would have run away from a road, not across it, at the sight or sound of a car. He said the dog must have gone crazy to do that. I agreed with him, and I told him that before someone else might find the dog and tell Hoffman I'd pick it up on my way home and bury it.

"Well, let's look at what we have. A field mouse goes crazy. (I believe I forgot one part of the girl's testimony about it; her reason for insisting on bringing it into her story. She thought it might have had 'some new kind of rabies' that had infected the boy despite the fact that the coroner told her that the skin on his hands was unbroken and that, in any case, rabies wouldn't have affected Tommy as soon as and in the manner that he was affected.) But did the field mouse act insane in any ordinary way? No, first it sat up and pawed at them, as though trying to warn them away. Ever see a field mouse do that, Dave? Then it nipped the girl when she picked it up. When she dropped it it started to run away and then ran back and attacked the boy. And by doing so committed suicide.

"Now let's look at the boy. Again insanity, ending—after several hours this time, but then who knows how long the field mouse was insane?—in suicide. Now I'll grant that people do go insane and commit suicide while insane. But I've read quite a bit about abnormal psychology, and I have never yet heard of the case of a person going suddenly and completely insane without having shown any preliminary symptoms and without there being some inciting cause, some traumatic experience, at the time of the onset of insanity. The Hoffman boy had just gone through quite the opposite of a traumatic experience, I'd

say. True, there had been the momentary worry as to whether the mouse had really bitten the girl, but that had been quickly and satisfactorily settled.

"Then there's the case of the dog, which is where I came in. If the dog was normal it committed suicide—but of course animals don't commit suicide, except possibly lemmings. There's doubt about them; their periodic migrations to the sea eventuate in mass suicide, of course, but it's in obedience to some blind instinct we don't understand but the result of which may be quite incidental to its cause or purpose.

"If Buck went mad, the madness started when he ran away from Hoffman about three hours before he ran in front of my car. He could have been running in the woods during that time and could have been running blindly by the time I hit him. If he had rabies there's no mystery to that facet of the case. I saw no foam on his muzzle, but I'm not sure enough of the symptoms of rabies or the course it takes to consider that proof one way or the other.

"But that's one thing I can find out, and will find out. I picked up the dog on my way back from the inquest, but I didn't bury him; he's wrapped in an old blanket in the back of the station wagon.

"When I finish this letter (which will be soon, thank God; I didn't realize when I started it how long it would have to run) I'm driving into Green Bay. For one reason, to mail this letter there so you'll be sure of getting it tomorrow; I'll send it care of the newspaper; you may get it a little sooner that way, especially if you don't go right home from work. And I'm going to take the dog to a laboratory for a rabies check. If I can't get it into one this evening, I'll come home and take it back tomorrow morning; I'll at least have got this letter into the mail.

"One more point. Please don't mention my name at the paper, either in

connection with your reason for getting time off or otherwise. It just might be recognized; if it got into print it almost certainly would be. And while I'm not exactly hiding from the F. B. I. I am ensuring that I won't be bothered for two full months by letting almost no one know where I am. A friend back home receives my mail for me and forwards only items he figures I might want right away. I'm not incognito here, except to the slight extent of using R. S. Staunton instead of Ralph S., but the chance of anyone in or near Bartlesville recognizing me is negligible. Just the same, please use only the initials when you write. Or if you're coming within a day or three don't bother writing.

"Best, Doc."

Dave Tabor put the letter down on the coffee table and picked up his martini. But he stared into it, not sipping.

"You're going, of course," Jean said.

"Sure, I'm going. I'm just thinking things out and I might as well think out loud. I'll see the city editor first thing in the morning and find out how soon I can take one week of my vacation. Don't worry; we'll still have two weeks for a honeymoon in November. Almost all vacations will be over by then and I'll have no trouble getting a second week without pay to tack onto the week I'll have coming.

"If I can't get a week off soon enough I'll still go, for two days. That I'm sure I can swing. My days off are Thursday and Sunday, but I can trade a shift with somebody to get two days in a row for once. I can get there in maybe four hours, not over five, so if I take off right after work I'll get there at nine or ten o'clock. And if I short myself on sleep a little and drive back at night, two nights later, I'll have a full forty-eight hours with Doc. Not enough time to do much snooping around for him, but at least I'll see him and get to talk with him."

"Dave, what do you think about the—the mystery he's got?"

"I—don't—know. If it was anybody else I'd think he was imagining things. But Doc's a trained observer, and if he thinks there's something screwy going on up there, maybe there is. It does sound like an off-beat chain of events."

"Can you explain any of it?"

"Well, rabies would cover the two animals. And it could be going around up there in the woods; it's summer, the time for it. It could explain the dog's actions completely. There is a stage at which the animal does run blindly. As for the mouse—hell, who has ever done extensive observing of how field mice might act during an initial stage of hydrophobia? Doc admits he knows little about the disease and its course."

"And the boy?"

Dave shrugged. "All we've got is negative evidence that he hasn't shown any previous symptoms of insanity—and all from untrained observers. He could have been showing plenty of symptoms that a psychiatrist would have spotted. Or even anyone who had a good lay knowledge of psychology."

"Wouldn't his doctor have that?"

"Possibly. Probably. But he testified that the last time he'd treated the boy had been last winter, for a mild strep throat. He probably saw Tommy around town a few times more recently than that, but he certainly didn't have him under observation."

Jean Morris shook her head sadly. "Spare me from reporters. They're all skeptics. I hope your friend Doc can shake you. Still better, I hope you'll find out something up there that shakes you. I wish I could go along."

"You can," Dave said promptly. "We can get married and make it our—"

"Down, boy. Much as I'd like to meet your Doc, we're waiting till November. The plans are made. To distract you, are you getting hungry?"

"Not quite yet. An hour or so, maybe?"

"All right, but I'd better put the potatoes in the oven; they'll take that long to bake. The steaks'll take only a few minutes and I can toss a salad while they're frying later. How about putting something on the phono?"

"Sure. Any choice?"

"Nothing romantic, lest it give you ideas. Some Stan Kenton, maybe. Or a symphony if you're feeling solemn. I'll settle for either."

She went to the kitchenette and he to the rack of records. But instead of reaching for one he turned. "Say, Jean, I'm going to use your phone. If I can get the city ed at home and if he doesn't need to consult a schedule to answer me, maybe I can find out the score tonight, and start making plans right away."

He made the call, and was stacking some records on the phonograph, set to play softly so they could still talk, when Jean came back from the kitchenette. She brought the second pitcher of martinis with her and refilled their glasses. "Well?"

"It's all right. He says we're a bit short handed this week but that if I work through Saturday—that's our big day on account of the big Sunday paper—I can take off then. For one of my two weeks or for both of them, whichever I want."

"Will you stay two?"

"Not unless by some chance I should run onto a really big story up there. And if I do, and bring it back with me, they probably won't charge any vacation time against me at all. Or unless—"

"Unless— Listen, darling, hear me out. Let me finish talking before you answer. We're grown-up people and sure we love one another; anyway, I'm sure I love you. There's no reason why we should lose almost four months out of our lives waiting till November."

"The hell with your mother." (He could say that; he had said it before,

on the same subject, without making her angry, because she knew he didn't really mean it the way it sounded.) "She won't mind; you've admitted that you can quit your job on short notice because there's another girl there who wants it and can handle it, so it won't upset the agency."

"Here's what I suggest. We can get our blood tests and license this week. You wouldn't be working Saturday anyway, and I can swap a shift, I think, and start early so I'm through by mid-afternoon. Meanwhile I can write Doc to meet us in Green Bay and we can be married there Saturday evening. I can't think of anyone—except your mother of course—that I'd rather have at our wedding. And since I suppose one doesn't have one's Godfather as a best man we can let him stand *in loco parentis* to you and give away the bride. He'll love doing that, especially after he's met you. And I'll guarantee that you'll love him."

Dave stopped talking and watched her, waiting. Jean was sitting with her eyes closed; she was considering. Then she opened them, came over and sat on the arm of his chair, put an arm around his shoulders. He knew then that this wasn't his lucky night, even before she spoke; she was softening the blow. If the answer was going to be a yes, she'd have waited for him to come to her.

She said, "Davey honey, I'm sorry. I do love you, but we've set the date November and I still want to keep it that way. It won't hurt us to wait, a few months out of a lifetime. You're not angry?"

"Of course not." He turned his head to grin up at her. It was five or ten minutes before she broke away, but it had seemed like five or ten seconds.

A little later, when Jean got up to put on the steaks, Dave asked her, "Paper and envelopes in that little desk over there?"

(Please turn to p. 79)

THE ABOMINABLE COALMAN

by IVAN T. SANDERSON

After my last article in the series on the Abominable Snowman had gone to press, a paper appeared in a much respected but, to the layman, obscure technical journal named "*Antiquity*" that set at nought a paragraph of editorializing on my part. So thundering was the information released in that scientific paper that the world press gave it considerable column space and in particular leading dailies like the *N.Y. Times*. This, however, reaffirmed, and in a most curious manner, my paragraph particularized above. Readers of F.U. are due a word of explanation.

On page 22, of your last issue the paragraph in question is headed *Oreopithecus* and concerns the small primate with many purely human characteristics, the fossil bones of which were found in Miocene strata (estimated to have been deposited 12,000,000 years ago) in a coal mine in Italy in 1880. I told there how these bones had been ignored till the swiss Anthropologist, Huezeler, reexamined them in 1956, and then went to the coalmine which is still being worked, found more bones, and announced his discoveries. I then went on to say that not one word had subsequently been heard about this and observed that the reason for this silence was probably that, if the existence of manlike creatures twelve *million* years ago was admitted, all the textbooks would have to be rewritten and almost every physical anthropologist would have to recant almost everything he or she has ever said.

This article in *Antiquity* written by none other than Dr. J.C. Trevor of the department of Anthropology of Cambridge University, England, now states categorically that the bones of this *Oreopithecus* (which incidentally means "Mountain-Monkey", not "the ape with the hillocky cusps to its

teeth" as reported by the press) do indeed display many purely humanoid as opposed to anthropoid or ape-like features and that therefore the *man*-branch of the primate stock is over twelve million years old. This has caused just the recantations and textbook redundancies that I predicted, but what Charles Fort called a "*wipe*" is already under way.

Confronted with an unpleasantness of such a very advanced order, the recanters immediately came up with a lulu. Terrified that what they call "the Darwinian theory" might be questioned, and to deflect scrutiny from their own earlier statements, they dredged up a splendid herring glowing redder than a neon sign. This is (and I quote) "It merely shifts the neutral stock of man and apes farther back in time. Charles Darwin himself thought the common ancestor of both might be found back in the Eocene period of 40 (sic) million years ago." Darwin did so state in his "Descent of Man" though the age of the Eocene is 60 not 40-millions of years ago, but nobody had dared say so before. In fact Drs. Dart and Broom in South Africa, Weidenreich and von Koenigswald in Indonesia, and other distinguished field workers were clobbered for mentioning *one* million!

If we turn up a Subman in California I suppose we will be told that that old buffoon Cuvier predicted it in 1850. Look him up some time. You may get a nasty shock.



THE MIND THING (continued from p. 77)

"Yes. Stamps too. Going to write Dr. Staunton?"

He went to the desk. "Might as well. It'll just be a short note telling him to look for me late Saturday evening. And if I write it here and mail it at the main p.o. on my way home, he'll probably get it tomorrow."

At the desk he found paper and took out his fountain pen, then turned. "Last chance," he said. "Do I tell him I'm coming alone?"

"Dave, be sensible. By November we'll have enough saved to get us off

to a good start. If you were willing for me to work a while after we're married, it might be different. But you're adamant about that so I'm going to be adamant about the date. Besides there still *is* my mother."

"To hell with your mother," Dave said. But the sudden sizzling of a steak being put on a hot skillet probably drowned him out.

The letter and the steaks ran a dead heat and were both done at the same time.

(To be continued)

FANNOTATIONS FANNOTATIONS FANNOTATIONS FANNOTATIONS FANNOTATIONS

by BELLE C. DIETZ

THE DISEASE known as "publishing fever" attacks many science fiction fans. The first symptoms are a dissatisfaction with the other amateur magazines being published, a feeling of "I-can-do-it-better", and inquiries into the various methods of reproducing material, acquiring mailing lists and soliciting contributions. The full flush of the ailment usually finds the new fan editor busily typing stencils (or ditto masters), writing letters and cranking duplicator handles. This is usually followed (after assembly and mailing of the initial effort) by the anxious nail-gnawing wait for Reactions, Comments and Reviews. A highly contagious disease, this, and a most widespread one. For instance, in this month's column you will find publications emanating from places like Sweden, California, Georgia, England, Indiana, etc. The cure? I don't think there is one. Like blowing at a dandelion, it simply spreads and spreads. By way of wafting the spores still further, I call your attention to....

AMRA V2#7 (George Scithers, Box 682, Stanford, Calif.) which is a spe-

cial interest fanzine devoted to discussion of the Conan series written by Robert E. Howard and which includes all other blood-and-thunder heroic barbarian stories. Beautifully lithographed, this costs 20¢ apiece or \$ for \$1 and provides excellent reading even to those only mildly interested in its particular genre. This issue contains an untitled fragment written by Howard, a book review by L. Sprague de Camp and some of the best reproduced, most detailed and beautifully drawn artwork this reviewer has seen, as well as other material of interest. Commended to your attention as a treat to the eyes.

YANDRO #81 (Robert & Juanita Coulson, Rt. 3, Wabash, Indiana) is published monthly and neatly. The twin editorials by the husband and wife team who edit it are, as usual, interest-holding and Marion Zimmer Bradley includes in her column discussions of Tibet, mountain-climbing and the mis-illustration of one of her published sf stories. There is also fan-written fiction, a fanzine review column by Bob and a nice large letter column to round out the issue. This

fanzine reads smoothly and evenly; there are no terribly high spots or very low ones. It lacks an aura of brilliance but makes up for that with competent editing, excellent mimeography and good artwork and layout. At 15¢ each or 12 for \$1.50, you can't go very wrong.

WRR V2#2 (Otto Pfeifer, 4736 40th N.E., Seattle 5, Wash.) is also co-edited by Wally Weber. Both of these Seattle fans have reputations for writing a particularly wacky brand of humor and they collaborate beautifully in this small but growing dittoed publication. It simply can't be had for money; only comment, contribution or stamps will do. Unhesitatingly recommended, even to newcomers. Contents include a wee letter column, fanzine reviews, fiction and articles. Much fun to read.

THE SKYRACK NEWSLETTER #9 (Ron Bennett, 7 Southway, Arthur's Ave., Harrogate, Yorkshire, England) is a monthly newssheet giving details of happenings in British sf fandom. Ron will gladly send it to you upon tender of 35¢ for 6 issues. This issue gives news of the London SF Circle's dispensing with formalized meetings and going back to its old social-type system and other tidbits unobtainable from any other source. Indispensable if one is to keep up with the whys and wherefores of our cousins across the Big Pond, not to mention that the Bennett style of writing is a pleasure to read.

SPHERE #12 (Joe Christoff, P.O. Box 212, Atlanta, Georgia, editor—Larry Thorndyke) got off to a flying start with me by having a cover by Ed Emsh, the pro artist, no less. One of the things that must be mentioned, outside of the price of 19¢ each or 6

for \$1, is the impeccable multilithed reproduction on one side of the page only, an immense relief to the average eyestrained fanzine reader. An article by Allen Glasser on the formation of the first sf club in 1929 (The Scienceers) and the production of the prototype of today's fanzine held my deep interest, as did a page of photographs of some of the original club members. I found a report of the 1958 world sf convention by George Scithers rather disjointed and not too well done but a photographically reproduced poem-with-illustrations page was really excellent. The fanzine reviews which brought this issue to a close suffered (in my opinion) from verbosity and maladroitness in English. Considering the marvellous reproduction and cover, I am afraid I was disappointed by most of the contents.

SHANGRI-L'AFFAIRES #46 (980-1/2 White Knoll Dr., Los Angeles 12, Calif.) is edited by Al Lewis and published by the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, a 25-year-old sf club. A thick, meaty production, this issue included the first part of a multi-authored report on the 17th world sf convention held last September in Detroit; a reply to some previously published criticisms of his policies by John W. Campbell Jr.; club minutes well and humorously written by Ted Johnstone, sundry articles and Shaggy's famous, fascinating letter column. The talented Bjo contributed not only her wonderful artwork but also a shiver-producing poem. Mimeography was excellent this time round and Shaggy's price of 20¢ each or six for \$1 gives you excellent value for your money. Letters of comment to plump up the letter section are more desirable than money, says the editor. Highly recommended.

The marrying monster

by CLAUD STAMM

GORO PUT down his tools and relaxed into a pile of wood shavings, his back against a half-finished bathtub. To enjoy the evening cool, he told himself, wiping his face with a blue and white rag. Actually, he wanted to postpone the evening meal. Either the rice would be overcooked to a sticky goo or he would be picking hard, underdone kernels out of his teeth all night. And bean soup, when he made it, always had things swimming in it that had no business there.

A night insect went weep-weep-weep. The sound, the night falling, and the thought of his own cooking made him think of his dead wife.

"She was a good cook, poor thing," he thought out loud. "My, my—how I miss her."

He gave a deep sigh. Oh, to have a wife again—a jolly, round wife and a good cook. Just like the old one with perhaps the small exception

that she would not eat a man out of house and home and herself into the grave in the bargain. Had he said that aloud? Bad sign, when a man talks to the night insects—better to go into the house, better to eat rice and bean soup. He shuddered.

He began to get up and paused halfway, one hand against the wood of the tub, the other shielding his eyes. He peered into the forest that came almost to the work yard. Someone was coming through there, he heard it. He sat down again. Fireflies flitted among the trees. What if it were his wife's spirit—would it be a chubby ghost? It should be.

A woman walked out of the forest.

She was tall, he noticed, watching her thread her way among finished and unfinished buckets and tubs, tall and slender—almost gaunt. She had her sleeves tied back out of the way with a white *tasuki* cord, as though ready for hard work, and her bare

arms were wiry and capable looking.

She bowed.

Goro scrambled to his feet, catching a splinter or two in his shoulder on the way up. He bowed.

"Good evening," said the woman. "Is this the house of Goro, the cooper who wants a wife that does not eat too much and is a good cook?"

Goro's eyes crossed and his mouth fell open. His fingers scrabbled.

"You do look unwell...like a starved goldfish," said the woman, "—I don't mean to seem rude."

"I haven't had dinner..." said Goro, for want of anything brilliant to say. He felt wondrously helpless; things like this did not usually come up in the tub-making business.

"Naturally, poor thing. I'm sure you can't cook well, either," said the woman and Goro marvelled how ever she had guessed it. "Well, I can cook. I can do the work of three women. Into the house with you now, before you catch cold. Shoo!"

She drove him ahead of her into the house.

"I would say I'm quite charming," she said, closing the door behind them, "when one gets used to me. As for my name, why, 'wife', I think, will do nicely."

And sometime in the next few days still with the feeling that he was being left out of things, Goro found himself married.

The new wife was an excellent cook and indeed did the work of three ordinary women. Dinner was never late, and the house was generally spotless. She spoke neither too much nor too little. On evenings when Goro came home discouraged, she always had some good remark ready about the tub-making business—how much artistry and labor went into a good bucket, how unreasonably little money went to the hard-working artist—cheering things, flattering things. Goro gained weight and was not unhappy. At mealtimes his

wife ate a little more than a bird but not quite so much as a large cat.

The food bills went up and up.

Goro gradually discovered that with the little eating going on, he was using up food at a rate to feed six or seven coopers together with a few aunts and uncles.

"Curious..." he muttered, "...very," and determined to investigate.

One morning he made a great fuss about getting measuring equipment together. He told his wife that he was going to a village half a day's walk away, to take measurements for the village head-man's new tub. Then he went a short distance into the forest and waited behind a tree.

When he saw his wife go to a nearby meadow to gather mushrooms, he flitted around to the back of the house. Hiding his tools behind the rear door, he crept inside. He shinned up the center pole and flattened out against one of the big ceiling beams. And waited.

His wife came back and put on the fire the largest pot in the house. From the storage bins she took about five pounds of rice and fell to washing it. She ladled out enough bean paste to nearly fill another big pot, and made bean soup.

"Who," wondered Goro on his beam, "is she expecting, and how many of them?" He blinked, blinked again—his eyes rather rolled up.

She had slid the kitchen door out of its frame and was using it for a dumpling factory, lining the dumplings up—lines and lines of rice dumplings like fat well-paid soldiers.

Then she stretched and peered about as if to make sure she had not forgotten something. Satisfied that she had not, she parted her hair and exposed the mouth in the center of her head.

Goro made a circle of his thumbs and forefingers, trying to calculate the size of the thing and nearly fell

off his perch. It was fairly large.

Into this crater, his wife pushed dumplings by ones and twos and they disappeared. To make certain, she washed them down with all the bean soup, ladles of bean soup.

When she had disposed of everything she waited a moment, expectantly. A cheery, satisfied rumble came from the top of her head.

"Burps, too," thought Goro. "A regular volcano. Wonder if there'll be smoke." He was too interested to be frightened.

But nothing further happened. She bound her hair back neatly, smiled, and left the house on some errand like any good, wifely wife.

Goro slipped down and out of the house, picking up his tools on the way. He went back into the forest, found a comfortable tree and sat down against its trunk to smoke his tiny pipe and think.

"I must have married one of the monsters the priests and old men talk about, a yamam'ba. A 'mountain-mother'. Hmm," he nodded, bit his lip, and squinted his eyes.

"Now why do you suppose they call them that?" he asked a squirrel that sat upright near his left foot, like an attentive, furry little doctor. "They come from the mountains—fine. But what's motherly about them, I do not understand.

"Squeerp!" said the squirrel, and ran halfway up the tree. From there it peered down and examined Goro's head.

He tilted his head back so that the squirrel could get a better look and told it that, at any rate, this was no kind of wife for a good man.

Then he stood up and began to walk home, looking down at the ground, kicking thoughtfully at fallen leaves and occasionally scratching his head.

He came out from among the trees and across the yard of his home, dragging his feet like a man who has

walked a long way.

He started speaking as soon as he put down his tools.

"Wife, I have been thinking about our marriage and—it hurts me to say it, you understand—but it was too sudden. No—don't interrupt," he said, though his wife had shown no sign of breaking in. "I'm very sorry, but I feel that we're simply not suited to each other."

"All right, husband, I'll leave," she answered in quite an ordinary voice, "even if it makes me unhappy. Could you do only one thing for me before I go? Nothing much—I'd like you to make me a tub—as a kind of souvenir. A very large one. For bathing in."

"The simplest thing in the world," said Goro, glad to get off so easily. "I have one ready, it happens. The very one I was sitting against when you came out of the forest. A very sound tub, one of my best."

"It has a lid, I hope," she said.

"All of my tubs have lids," said Goro. "Well-fitting lids. Water stays warm in my tubs, even without a fire, once that lid is on. Come, I'll show it to you."

He led her out to the tub.

"See? There's the lid, right up against it," he said, thumping the tub with his fist. "Feel that wood! Isn't it a beauty?"

She looked into the tub and agreed that it was getting harder and harder to find real quality in tubs. "Too bad there's that large hole in it," she said.

"Hole?" said Goro. "Hole? A hole in one of my tubs? Impossible... where's that hole?"

He put his hands on the edge to raise himself and peered over.

"There. Bottom right," she said. "Can't you see it?"

"Oh, the bottom..." said Goro, leaning further over the edge. "It's too dark to—"

She seized Goro's trousers in a firm grip and heaved.

"—see," he finished, at the bottom of the tub. He was still wondering how he had gotten down there when the lid came down, bang, and it grew very dark. He felt the tub sail up, come to rest on something and begin to move forward with an up and down rocking movement.

It did not take Goro long, in his bucket-shaped night, to realize that the yamam'ba, having no further reason to pretend a feminine weakness she probably despised anyway, had placed the tub on her head and was on her way home. To the mountain.

"Excuse me," he called out. "Where are we going?"

"To dinner," came his former wife's voice through the wood. It grated unpleasantly. He decided to ask no more questions.

Deep into the woods went the yamam'ba, cutting through thicket and underbrush, the tub jouncing easily on her head, up and up into the mountains. Tireless on her long, rangy legs, she travelled along dead, forgotten roads lined with gnarled ugly trees. Goro heard their branches, bump-crack-bump, against his self-made prison. A thin edge of lesser darkness began to show at the top. He hoped it was the first time the lid had slipped on a tub made by Goro; this sort of thing could ruin years of reputation. But it might mean a way out of the tub.

The opening grew wider. Looking up, he was able to see a few stars. Did he imagine it, or was the tub slowing down? He hoped he was not going to be eaten immediately.

The tub stopped and settled.

Something rough, twisted, and snakelike appeared in the opening. It did not move. Nothing moved. He put out his hand—it was a branch.

He gave the branch a delicate jiggle; it felt solid. The yamam'ba, he guessed, must have tired and sat down to rest against a tree. Very cautiously he lifted himself by the

branch, trying to move neither the lid nor the tub which must still be resting on the monster's head.

He heard a faint snore. Top or forward mouth, he wondered. He pulled himself to his feet, trying not to breathe and at last stood with his head out of the tub. The branch was thick, and the next branch, right above, looked dependable. Healthy wood; he appreciated that. Then came a few feet of bark—that would be hard climbing—but above that, four or five branches, almost a ladder. Further, it was too dark to see.

He tensed, took a deep breath, then gave a push and sent the heavy lid crashing down on the sleeping yamam'ba. Up she leaped, and the tub went flying, but Goro was already climbing from branch to branch. In a nearby tree some monkeys woke up and watched Goro's footwork with shame and envy.

From the ground the yamam'ba stared up at him. It was a rare chance to see just what a yamam'ba really wore for a face, and decided it was not very attractive.

Down below, the monster was letting down her horrible hair in a businesslike manner.

"Dinner will be early," she said with a ghastly, girlish laugh, "I was getting quite hungry."

She started up the tree, the top mouth opening and closing. There were teeth in it.

"We yamam'ba are very good with trees," she said, climbing steadily. "Don't climb any higher. It will only make you tired and sweaty and bitter to the taste. Say prayers instead and become calm and delicious."

"I hope I burn your tongue if you have one in there," said Goro, a little beside himself. "And try not to be such a chatterbox. You're making my head buzz."

He *did* hear a distinct buzzing, a small roaring right by his head where he was holding on to a thin branch.

He tried to move his hand away from the sound. Something small sat down on his thumb and set it on fire.

"Ya-yowch!" he said, loudly.

"Tee-hee-hee!" went the yamam'ba, coming up with an intimate rustling of leaves.

Goro sucked his thumb which had swollen surprisingly and stared at the ball-like thing hanging only an arm's length away. The buzzing came from it. Very carefully he reached out to see if he would be able to grab it instantly. He thought the size would be about right.

A hard, scaly hand with claws came groping through the branches. He moved his foot out of the way and waited for the head. It appeared, the top mouth gaping.

"Tee-hee-hee," said the yamam'ba, using both mouths.

"Tee-hee-hee yourself," said Goro. "Have a goody." And into the top of her head he dropped the buzzing ball.

"Whatever it was, it had a bad taste and your blood will wash it away," said the yamam'ba but just then the hornets woke up, highly irritated from lack of sleep.

They flew 'round and 'round inside the yamam'ba. A few of them tickled. Most of them stung. And all of them together worked a havoc in the delicate equipment that makes up the yamam'ba interior.

The yamam'ba made a noise like a frying and a noise like a boiling, and a noise like nameless things running through the night with their ears on fire. She tumbled from the tree, into the tub waiting below and bounced about inside it making unpleasant sounds too numerous to mention.

Goro followed, but more slowly. He arrived in time to see the tub skipping and hopping at the edge of the road which at that point was quite narrow. It teetered for a moment and then sailed out in a gracious curve, trailing its uproar behind it. Goro kneeled and peered down. It was very dark. From far below came a soft boompety-boomp. Then a mere whisper of a crash.

Goro got up, shaking his head. He dusted his knees and went away down the road, growing smaller in the cold, lonely night.



FARMS ON VENUS?

Dr. Gavril Tikhov, the eminent Russian astro-botanist, is a specialist on growing plants away off in space—really far out. Like on Mars.

He's been up in the Pamir Mountains, visiting plants that grow in the severest conditions known. And what did he discover?

Such plants don't have chlorophyll in their leaves. They make use of red and infra-red rays from the sun, not ultra-violet or white light.

You'll appreciate the excitement when you recall that exactly the same reddish-orange spectra are seen in light coming from Mars and Venus.

So if there's plant life up in the Pamirs, maybe we will find little green men on Mars harvesting pink corn or purple celery?

TWO- MAN SPACE CABIN

THE WORLD'S smallest efficiency apartment—a space capsule to simulate living conditions on man's first extended trip to outer space—has been delivered to the USAF Aerospace Medical Center's School of Aviation Medicine at Brooks Air Force Base, Texas.

Designed for research use by the School's Astroecology Section, the Space Cabin Simulator will be used to test the mental and physical stresses on men in space.

The capsule is designed for occupancy by two astronauts for a period of up to 30 days, simulating as closely as possible conditions that would actually be encountered on a 30-day venture into space.

Information obtained from research with this capsule is expected to pave the way for the design of living and working accommodations in future extended-trip space vehicles.

Built at Minneapolis-Honeywell's Aeronautical Division plant in Minneapolis, Minn., the manned satellite simulator is an elliptical steel tank eight feet high and twelve feet long. Ingeniously condensed within these

confines are most of the comforts of home and a complex maze of scientific equipment.

Air Force personnel selected for the first month-long simulated space flight will find their space home equipped with comfortable chairs, a bed, sanitary facilities, food, and cooking facilities.

However, along with these comforts, the astronauts will also find that they are completely isolated from the world as they know it, just as they would be on a space flight.

Every effort has been made to simulate the isolation of space. The space men will be unable to see out of their capsule. Their only means of communication will be by radio, and atmospheric noise and disturbance will be superimposed on their radio circuit.

The new cabin is a vast improvement over the School's one-man simulator that made world headlines last year when A/IC Donald G. Farrell made a seven-day "moon trip" inside it. The old cabin is still yielding valuable information to School researchers, however, and will continue to be

used after the arrival of the two-man cabin.

It was over 10 years ago that Dr. Hubertus Strughold organized the unique Department of Space Medicine at the School to lay the groundwork for man's exploration of space. It was also Dr. Strughold, an internationally known German born physician-scientist, who sketched the original plans for the sealed cabin in which Farrell made his fantastic voyage.

Specifications for the new two-man capsule were developed jointly by Minneapolis-Honeywell Corp. and School of Aviation Medicine specialists.

J. R. Nelson, Honeywell's project engineer on the simulated space cabin, said, "We have very carefully disguised or obscured any part of this cabin that might remind an occupant that he is still on the ground."

Closed circuit television cameras used to keep the occupants under constant observation are concealed behind the control panel and will peer through inconspicuous openings. Observation ports on the side of the cabin contain one-way glass which is opaque from the inside.

The door of the capsule contains an airlock so that biological specimens can be passed out without appreciably changing pressurization and without direct contact between the astronauts and research scientists outside.

In designing the space capsule, Honeywell engineers started with a list of human requirements for a 30-day period, ranging from air to breathe to recorded music and a place for cigarette ashes.

The next step was to design reliable and compact equipment to serve all of these needs, squeeze it into the capsule, and still leave sufficient living and working area for occupancy by two men.

Starting with man's most basic need, pure breathing air, Honeywell designed and built an atmosphere con-

trol system with delicate sensing equipment to measure oxygen, carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and carbon monoxide.

A complex system of controls automatically pumps in oxygen when needed, reduces carbon dioxide through the use of chemical absorption beds, pumps in nitrogen if required, and catalytically filters carbon monoxide.

Provision was even made for astronauts who might enjoy a smoke. The system includes a high voltage electrostatic filter to ionize and trap dust and smoke particles.

The space capsule is provided with heating and cooling elements for temperature control and a humidity control device that can pull moisture from the air and store it along with the water supply.

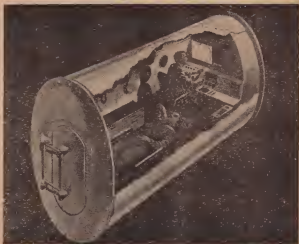
Food for the simulated trip will be non-perishable so refrigeration is not required, but a heating element will be provided to warm up soup and coffee.

The space capsule includes a panel with instruments which record environmental conditions, and controls to alter these conditions. Also included are simulated space navigational controls for "flying" the capsule.

Information from the space capsule is piped outside to a highly instrumented console which will precisely record environmental conditions and occupant reaction for study by space medical researchers at Brooks Air Force Base.

Atmospheric controls for the cabin are designed so that either the occupants or researchers at the outside console can vary the pressurization, oxygen, carbon dioxide, temperature or humidity. Final control is in the hands of outside monitors. Cabin pressurization, for example, can be varied within a range of sea level to 28,000 feet.

For their daily needs the space travelers will be allotted two quarts of water and 3000 calories of food.



*This artist's conception shows the living quarters and control panel of the Space Cabin simulator. The capsule is designed for occupancy by two subjects for a period of 30 days, simulating as closely as possible conditions that would actually be encountered on a month long venture into space. The simulator will not reproduce weightlessness to be encountered in actual space flight, nor will subjects in the simulator be exposed to cosmic radiation or the heavy G-forces of blastoff and re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere. Readers of this magazine will, we are certain, remember Harry Harrison's prophetic **TRAINEE FOR MARS**.*

They will have two cubic feet of space, about the size of an overnight bag, to store their clothes, and about two cubic feet of storage space for personal belongings.

The subjects will be able to tell whether it is night or day only by clocks. Simulated flight conditions and problems will be presented to them on a television screen. The men will use controls on their panel to solve the problems.

Describing conditions in the space cabin simulator, Dr. B. E. Welch,

Chief of the School's Astroecology Section, said:

"The men who enter the cabin will be completely sealed off from the world to which they have grown so accustomed. Time will weigh heavily on their minds, and boredom will become their constant companion. The familiar day-night cycle they live by will be lost. Though they will be able to stand erect and move about a bit in the cabin, they will still be greatly cramped during the thirty days. And thirty days can be a very long time."

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BEEP

by ROBERT BLOCH

NO MORE, MY LADY

LADY ROSE from her launching pad shortly before dawn on April 1st. She carried a full payload of sending and receiving instruments as she soared triumphantly into space, and officials freely predicted that she would go into orbit around the sun by April 5th.

S. O. Bushwhacker rose from his pad shortly before noon on the latter date. He carried a full payload of benzedrine and tranquilizers as he soared triumphantly into his executive suite at UBC in Hollywood, and officials freely predicted that he would go into orbit today without biting the ceiling.

Lady—or Unmanned Satellite 69, as she was affectionately known to the government observers and astronomers who tracked her course—fell into solar orbit around 3 p.m. The faint and intermittent beep-beep of her signalling devices reassured those who charted her progress.

S. O. Bushwhacker—or “old S.O.B.”, as he was affectionately known to the underlings and network minions who tracked his course—returned from a leisurely luncheon at Tail o’ the Cock and fell into his chair around 3 p.m. The faint and intermittent burping of his digestive

devices reassured those who charted his progress.

Exactly what prompted Lady’s sudden outburst a half hour later is still a matter of conjecture. But there is no dispute as to what caused S. O. Bushwhacker’s outburst at precisely the same time.

He was sitting in his private washroom, monitoring a new network comedy show, about a group of loveable hillbillies, called *The Real Rabinowitzes*, when the explosion occurred.

Members of his staff rushed in from the outer office, fully expecting that the inevitable had finally occurred—somebody had planted depth-charges in the plumbing.

The plumbing, however, was intact. It was Mr. Bushwhacker who had gone to pieces.

“Did you hear that?” he shouted, gesticulating at the TV set.

“Hear what?” inquired personal secretary Crosley Sneed.

“The commercial!” Bushwhacker stabbed a shaking finger in the direction of the television screen. “Listen!”

Centered on the tube was the stern, distinguished face of a prominent physician. Like all medical scientists, he had one of those machines which

light up to reveal a cross-section of the human body through which pills raced, arrows of pain darted, and small fires raged in the large intestine.

Crosley Sneed shrugged. "Looks okay to me," he murmured. "Of course, maybe we could blow up that intestine a little more. Make it king-size, for greater visual impact, like—"

"Never mind how it looks!" Bushwhacker yelled. "I designed the damned thing myself. I'm asking you to listen!"

The prominent physician was pointing his index finger at the viewing audience, as prominent physicians so frequently do—with or without the benefit of finger-cots—and speaking earnestly.

"—and so remember, friends, *modern* hemorrhoids demand a *modern* remedy. That's why leading scientists recommend amazing new miracle discovery, Preparation J—the only hemorrhoid remedy in the world that helps shrink atomic piles! If you suffer from the burning, itching torture of piles, why not limp down to your friendly neighborhood BEEP-BEEP today?"

"Whad' he say?" demanded Crosley Sneed.

"Yes, folks, that's Preparation J—the new, quick-acting ointment that will bring instant relief to your BEEP-BEEP or double your money back! Remember the name—that's Preparation BEEP-BEEP—"

"Hear that?" Mr. Bushwhacker exclaimed. Sneed and the others nodded; they heard it loud and clear. Punctuating every few words now came the BEEP-BEEP tones, blasting out of the set and drowning out the commercial.

"Sabotage!" Mr. Bushwhacker shouted. "We're being jammed by another network. Get me Edward R. Murrow, that—"

"Wait a moment." As is usual in a crisis, cooler and wiser heads prevailed. Fortunately, one of the staff-

members was the distinguished psychiatrist, J. Hooper Trendex, who may be remembered as the author of that popular adult western series, *Have Couch—Will Travel*.

It was he who spoke, and now stepped forward to switch channels on the set. For a moment Mr. Bushwhacker's jaws clenched convulsively; never before had anyone dared to tune in on a rival network here at UBC, and to do so now, in the sacred confines of his own private washroom—

But the deed was done, and J. Hooper Trendex stepped back as a face and voice emerged from the tube. An idiot child gaggled forth in a smiling, loathesome closeup. "Look, Mom!" the little cretin shouted. "No BEEP-BEEP!"

"Just as I suspected," murmured Trendex. "All over the channels. This isn't sabotage. It's the signal from that new satellite they sent up the other day. The one they call Lady."

"*Mamma mia!*" Mr. Bushwhacker groaned and seated himself on the sole available article of furniture in the room.

"I'm quite sure," Trendex continued. "Radio signals have been coming in for days—just a faint beep at regular intervals."

"But this isn't a faint beep," Mr. Bushwhacker protested. "It's a blast! And it's interrupting every few seconds. How can anyone listen to television with that noise going on?"

"I'm positive Washington is already aware of the difficulty," Trendex soothed. "Perhaps something went wrong when the satellite began to orbit around the sun. They'll take care of it down there. Meanwhile, people can always listen to radio."

"Oh no they can't!" Otis Wormley, chief of the Radio Division, burst into the room just in time to catch the last remark. "All hell's breaking loose, Chief!" he gasped. "I just got word from the engineers. Somebody is beeping Arthur Godfrey!"

Mr. Bushwhacker sprang to his feet. "Is nothing sacred?" he cried. "This has gone far enough. Get the FCC on the phone. Tell them we want the interference stopped immediately. It *must* be stopped before we hit A-Time tonight. Don't you realize we're premiering the new western?"

All faces sobered. UBC was indeed launching a new western series—its twenty-seventh effort of the season, and undoubtedly one of the best. Sick and tired of cowboys armed with pistols, revolvers, derringers, rifles and sawed-off shotguns, the network had come up with a novelty designed to revolutionize the field; the first cowboy in television history to carry a machine-gun.

"Get moving!" ordered Mr. Bushwhacker. "We've got to save that show!"

His entire staff mobilized into action, almost precisely at the same moment as other staffs at other networks moved into the fray. They called the FCC and the FCC called the Department of Defense and the Department of Defense called the Top Brass and the Top Brass called the Top Scientists, but—

At 9 o'clock, when the new cowboy hero pointed his weapon at the crooked gambler and pulled the trigger, the machine-gun beeped.

"Holy Moley!" screamed Mr. Bushwhacker. "Why can't somebody do something?"

"You heard the reports," Trendex told him. "Nobody really understands just what went wrong. Apparently the sun's proximity did something to the sending devices—stepped up the signal and beamed it over to AM and FM frequencies. Engineers say it's up to a decibel-count of around eighty right now and rising fast. Just one of those freak coincidences, but apparently there's nothing dangerous about the phenomenon."

"Nothing dangerous? It's killing the ratings, and you say it isn't dangerous." Mr. Bushwhacker gulped.

"How long do they expect this noise to go on?"

Trendex shrugged. "There's no telling. Lady can orbit around the sun for years, apparently. And the signals should continue for the life of the satellite."

"Satellite, schmatsellite!" Mr. Bushwhacker smote his desk a vicious blow. "You realize what this means? We'll get beeped out of business!"

During the days that followed, it seemed as if his grim prediction was all too true. Frantic TV viewers and radio listeners were promptly reassured as to the source of the strange sounds emanating from their sets, but this did nothing to alleviate their irritation at the interruptions. Nobody wanted to hear something called *This Is Your Beep* or follow the irregular rhythm of Lawrence Welk and his *Beep-Beep* music. So the sets clicked off, and the sponsors cancelled in droves.

Meanwhile, the volume and irregularity of the signals continued to rise. Die-hard listeners began to sue the networks because of headaches they suffered while attempting to listen to headache-remedy commercials. A mob armed with switchblades and zap-guns picketed the studios where *American Bandstand* originated, protesting that the beeps were destroying the beat of rock-'n-roll. Several prominent stand-up comedians laid down on the couch in utter frustration because while their writers had all come up with beep-beep gags, there was no medium on which the routines could be heard.

Finally, the President preempted the networks for a Special Message, but by this time almost nobody was bothering to listen. The few who did reported that he said little or nothing. Mostly, he just beeped.

"It can't go on," Mr. Bushwhacker moaned. "People won't be able to get along without TV! Why, they've got nothing to do! Reports say they're flipping all over the country—jump-

ing off roofs, blowing their brains out, even reading books." He paused, then resumed grimly. "That's right, reading books. You know what that means, don't you, Trendex? You're a psychiatrist. You've heard what happens when people start reading. It gets so they can't stop. First thing you know, everybody'll be hooked, they can't kick the habit—"

"I know," Trendex sighed. "Another few months and we'll lose our audience forever. Not only are they reading now, but some of them are even starting to go outdoors again. Taking walks, going on picnics, indulging in sports and games and their own home entertainment. You know what that will lead to. Sooner or later somebody is bound to re-discover sex, and then—"

"This is the ulcer bit! There's got to be some way out!"

"So there is," Trendex mused, softly. "I've checked the government engineering reports, and they've found a method. The trouble is, they can't afford it. The government doesn't have the kind of money we have here at the network."

"Then let's spend the money," Mr. Bushwhacker groaned. "I don't care what it costs, just as long as we get back into business."

"Very well," Trendex murmured. "We'll call a meeting of execs from all networks and raise a kitty. Each network buys its own satellite from the government—yes, they have them ready for launching, but it costs too much to send them up. We'll foot the bill, provided our engineers are allowed to install a frequency system to jam out and ride over the beep-beep signal. And we'll put in a projection system too—"

As he continued, Mr. Bushwhacker's eyes widened. "It'll cost a fortune," he commented. "And what about the set-manufacturers?"

"Who cares?" Trendex shrugged. "As for the cost, once you start operating again, you can always raise

the rates and get the money back from the sponsors."

And that is exactly the way it worked out.

Two weeks later, to the day, UBC launched its first satellite. Promptly at sunset, Mr. Bushwhacker and his staff gathered at the window and gazed at the darkening sky. Behind them stood the inner-office TV set, silent and neglected. It would remain so from now on, and so would all the television receivers and radio sets throughout the country and the world.

Because now, up in the sky, the lights of the 21,000,000,000-mile screen brightened into view, projecting the picture from the transmitting satellite orbiting forever around the sun. And all over the nation, eager eyes sought the heavens.

Up there the tremendous face beamed benevolently at the multitude below. A huge hand flicked a switch and a cross-section of the human body appeared against the Milky Way.

Then came the historic moment, as the voice thundered clearly from the sky, penetrating palatial mansions and poorest tenements alike.

"Friends," boomed the message from the heavens. "Are you one of the three out of four people who can't visit the washroom after every meal? Scientists say—"

Down on earth, Mr. Bushwhacker wasn't listening to what scientists say. He was hugging Trendex, and he had a message of his own. "It works!" he exulted. "It really works!"

"Certainly marvelous," Trendex agreed. "This marks the beginning of a new era of communication. No more sets, no more aerials—"

"Never mind that jazz," Mr. Bushwhacker said, as the voice in the sky proclaimed amazing new relief from harsh laxatives. He winked at Trendex, and grinned.

"The important thing to remember," he said, "is that from now on, nobody can ever turn it off..."



THOUGHTS HAVE WINGS

You Can Influence Others With Your Thinking!

TRY IT SOME TIME. Concentrate intently upon another person seated in a room with you, without his noticing it. Observe him gradually become restless and finally turn and look in your direction. Simple — yet it is a *positive demonstration* that thought generates a mental energy which can be projected from your mind to the consciousness of another. Do you realize how much of your success and happiness in life depend upon your influencing others? Is it not important to you to have others understand your point of view — to be receptive to your proposals?

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